THE PRINCIPAL

by
Frank Deese

MISSING PG. 38

FOURTH DRAFT

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FADE IN:

EXT. SYCAMORE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY (MORNING)

Scores of mostly white high school students lock their bicycles, park their cars, get in a few quick words with their friends, and do whatever else they can to put off entering the quad courtyards for their first period class.

A freshman girl frantically copies a homework page while her best friend looks on.

Two sophomore boys look in all directions from their mopeds so as not to get caught smoking cigarettes. One points in our direction as we pull in through the driver's window of a parked 1978 Buick Regal to see--

INT. THE BUICK

--RICK LATIMER, a handsome man with a strong but unshaven face, sleeping in the driver's seat with his head resting on the open window frame. A chewed-up styrofoam coffee cup is crushed in the hand that isn't clutching the pair of high-powered BINOCULARS.

The Morning Bell RINGS. Rick lifts his head, squinting his eyes against the bright sky. He hits the steering wheel,

RICK
Shit.

then crumples a bag of BURGER KING trash before reaching for the door handle.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL

Somewhat disheveled in slacks and a half-buttoned dress shirt, RICK angrily throws the BURGER KING BAG into a trash can as he marches through the Sycamore trees planted around the new school.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CENTRAL QUAD

The few students who see RICK LATIMER on his way to the office, whisper and glance at him tucking a NECK TIE under his collar.

He walks past the row of office windows where WORKERS replace the tinted PLEXIGLASS PANES on which odd patterns of DUCT TAPE try hiding the designs of a Vandal: Swastikas and Heavy Metal Logos.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

RICK LATIMER receives more of the same stares as he walks on past the STUDENTS waiting behind the attendance counter and the rather attractive school RECEPTIONIST who waves him down to whisper in his ear.

RECEPTIONIST
Mr. Latimer. The students are talking.
(pinching his unbuttoned shirt)
They say your wife kicked you out of the house.

Rick glances back to the students at the attendance counter.

RICK
They're a year late.

He continues into the main office through an open door marked "MYRA EVERS -- Counselor A-F". A BLACK WOMAN in her mid-forties looks up from her desk in front of her windows where under the duct tape outside, "NIG--- BITCH" has been melted into the plexiglass with some sort of Blow Torch.

A custodian outside replaces the "GER" pane next to a boarded over HOLE where the Vandal melted his way inside.

CUT TO:

INT. MYRA EVERS' OFFICE

MYRA EVERS sits up with reserved but bated breath as RICK stops halfway between her desk and the door.

RICK
I'm sorry. He didn't show up.

Mrs. Evers hides her disappointment with a smile.

MRS. EVERS
You didn't have to do that, Rick.

RICK
Someone has to catch him in the act. Before we can do anything.

Mrs. Evers is looking to a mended but empty DISPLAY CASE near her desk.

MRS. EVERS
It's seems almost comic, Rick. Edgar died for his country twenty years ago. Now his silly wife loses the only recognition he ever got for it.

Mrs. Evers wipes an eye with a Kleenex from her desk.

MRS. EVERS (CON'T)
Thank you.

Rick stares at the woman with the racist epithet still behind her. His simmering anger nearly boils when BYRON KENNEDY, a white and fresh out of education school, rounds the doorway.

BYRON
Rick! You're up.

Rick hands Byron a set of keys as he passes him out the door.

RICK
(privately)
Get me Danny Woodbury's locker combination. Right now.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN OFFICE

Making a knot in the TIE he'd put around his neck, RICK marches back past the other offices with BYRON hanging on his ear.

BYRON
Hold on a second. What makes you think he did it?

RICK
His handwriting.

He turns through a door marked: RICHARD P. LATIMER -- PRINCIPAL. His SECRETARY, follows them in from her desk outside.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

RICK opens the Mahogany Cabinet in the office that -- except for the "Latimer Licks Dog Dicks" blow-torched into the windows looking through the sycamore trees -- is more luxurious than any high school principal could hope for.

In the closet mirror, he quickly finishes the knot in his tie as his secretary PEGI takes a SPORT COAT off the hanger.

BYRON
No, Rick. Don't let them hang you over a piece of bronze. Congress can replace a Medal of Honor. I'll call'em today.

PEGI
Don't forget you have curriculum cabinet next period.

BYRON
You remember what the district lawyer said last time?

PEGI
And a speech at the pep rally.

BYRON
"Hunches aren't probable cause!"

Rick puts on his Sport Coat, then finally looks at Byron.

RICK
Mine are.

He takes a POCKET SHAVER from Pegi's hand as he marches out.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE 800 QUAD - DAY

Through the courtyard quad crowded between classes, RICK LATIMER follows a freckled student with short, sandy hair, carrying a Pee-Chee folder personalized with Swastikas and Heavy Metal Logos.

DANNY WOODBURY slaps hands with a passerby we assume is a friend-

DANNY
Dude.

-then continues on to his LOCKER in the middle of many. He whistles obliviously to himself, rolling off the combination and opening the door when he hears a GIRL passing by.

GIRL
Hi, Mr. Latimer!

Danny whips around with a gasp as Rick grabs the LOCKER DOOR firmly with his left hand. Danny tries to force it closed, but can't.

RICK
Morning, Dan. Di'n't you want something?

Rick gestures to the locker Danny is trying his best to close against the strength of Rick's left arm. Danny shakes his head.

DANNY
I just remembered. I don't need anything.

RICK
Pretend you do.

Danny thinks, stalling for time. He points to the courtyard thinning out as students make their way to their next class.

DANNY
Uh, sir. I'm going to be late for Algebra.

Rick still holds the door open.

RICK
Then go. I'm not keeping you.

Danny studies Rick, thinks about what he just said, then smiles with new confidence.

DANNY
Uh uh. You can't look through my locker without a search warrant. I know. My dad's a lawyer.

RICK
I can't open it without a search warrant. My dad's a teacher.

There is a long silence as the two stare into each other's eyes, intensifying the stand off.

RICK (CON'T)
All I want is Mrs. Evers' medal. You give me that and I'll forget everything else. All the racist crap on the windows. Everything.

Still unable to close his locker, Danny considers this.

DANNY
You mean like somebody else coulda gave it to me? And it doesn't prove I did anything?

RICK
You were only returning it. No questions.

DANNY
Swear to God?

Rick nods his head, slowly taking his hand from the locker door to show good faith.

Danny quells a grin as he reaches into the piled up mess and extracts a RED, WHITE, AND BLUE RIBBON on which hangs a blow-torched LUMP OF BRONZE -- once this nation's highest honor.

Danny's quelled grin breaks open across his face.

DANNY
Guess it's kinda hot in there.

After a moment of disbelief, Rick noticeably fights his reflex to smash the white punk's face into the lockers.

Instead he SLAMS HIS ELBOW as hard as he can into the locker next to Danny's.

The contents of Danny's locker fall to the cement including the hidden and incriminating Propane BLOW TORCH which rolls around Rick's feet.

RICK
Well. Look at that.

DANNY
Fucker!! You swore!

And with that Danny charges into Rick as he scoops up the key piece of evidence and takes off running into the moving crowd. Rick takes off after him.

CUT TO:

THE SCHOOL WALKWAY

where DANNY plows through the startled and screaming students knocking one girl flat on her ass, school books flying.

RICK
Drop the torch, Danny! Put it down!

Rick nearly catches up, but not before the blow torch wielding fugitive leaps down the stairs and across the central quad into the lunch area.

Rick does the same, proving he's not to be out maneuvered by any age.

CUT TO:

THE LUNCH AREA

and DANNY dodging between the populated LUNCH TABLES while RICK runs around to head him off at the other end.

Seeing he's about to be nabbed, Danny leaps onto one of the tables, smashing some chili fries and squashing a burrito combo before he jumps from table to table--about to get away.

Rick changes direction to catch up between the tables. He yells out to any of the snacking students.

RICK
Stop him!!

One does, by the ankle, tripping Danny over the side so that the NECK of his BLOW TORCH slams into the edge of the next table.

Danny screams when a giant BLUE FLAME roars over his arm.

The blow torch silently rolls across the cement.

Looking down at Danny, burned and unconscious, Rick's only wish is to turn the clock back ten seconds.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL BOARD CHAMBERS - NIGHT

ANGLE - THE MELTED MEDAL OF HONOR

fondled in the hands of School Board President DICK ELLIOT. Disgusted by what has happened to it, he looks up with a sympathetic glance to RICK LATIMER in a single chair at the focus of the school board's HORSESHOE TABLE.

ELLIOT
You can sit down, Mr. Woodbury. This isn't a courtroom.

RON WOODBURY, Danny's aforementioned lawyer father, ignores the request as he opens the LEGAL FILE he retrieved from his place at the table.

MR. WOODBURY
Richard P. Latimer. Reprimanded--one, two,-- three times for student rights violations. Four suspensions reversed for failure to allow accused students legal counsel. And how can you explain forcing a student to eat his crib notes during a history test?

RICK
He hid 'em in his mouth. I waited.

ELLIOT
You don't need to tell us what we already know, Mr. Woodbury.

Woodbury doesn't reply. He just starts putting papers back in his briefcase.

MR. WOODBURY
Then I guess I've said enough.

RICK
(under his breath)
An hour ago.

MR. WOODBURY
My Danny is lying in a hospital bed with half his left arm burned off. If this board won't take the proper action, I will.

ELLIOT
Mr. Woodbury. He was running with a dangerous weapon.

MR. WOODBURY
He was chased.

BOARD MEMBER KILSBY
Yes. To protect student safety.

ELLIOT
Rick was right in chasing him.

MR. WOODBURY
Was he right in forcing open Danny's locker without a warrant or probable cause?

Elliot looks over the molten medal in his hand.

ELLIOT
I'm not sure he wasn't.

SCHOOL ATTORNEY
Hold it! Just a moment.

DAVID PAXON, the school district's Attorney, gets out of his seat for a private conference with Elliot.

PAXON (CON'T)
Dick. You know right or wrong isn't the issue here. It's the law. And if we can't come up with a reasonable defense why Latimer took it into his own hands again, we can just as well kiss our liability insurance policy "good-bye".

Paxon goes back to his seat. Elliot ponders a little while longer.

ELLIOT
Rick. You're and excellent principal. Attendance at Sycamore is up twenty percent. Test scores have almost doubled. You care about what you're doing. And I'm proud to have had you working for us.

President Elliot and Principal Latimer stare at each other over the table, each understanding the other's point of view.

ELLIOT (CON'T)
But considering the circumstances from where I sit today, I have no other choice but to ask for your resignation.

Elliot waits a moment for Rick's reply.

RICK
And I have no other choice but to refuse it.

Mr. Woodbury clicks his briefcase closed.

MR. WOODBURY
Then I guess I'll see you all in court.

PAXON
No. Wait.

Paxon looks to Dick Elliot. Elliot quietly signals Rick to leave.

ELLIOT
We'll let you know.

Rick slowly stands up from his chair, taking his jacket off the back and giving Woodbury a dirty glance before walking out.

PAXON
There's no reason we can't negotiate a deal if all Mr. Woodbury wants is Latimer out of his son's school.

ELLIOT
I won't fire him. Not for this.

PAXON
You don't have to. Just transfer him. To another high school in the district.

A short pause as the two men and the school board consider.

MR. WOODBURY
I'd agree to that.

ELLIOT
All the others have principals.

Paxon slowly shakes his head.

PAXON
Not Chaparral.

There is a hush over the room as everyone considers this mysterious possibility. Mr. Woodbury smiles. Board Member KILSBY protests.

MR. KILSBY
That's an insult. He'll resign first.

PAXON
Fine.

Kilsby turns his attention to President Elliot.

MR. KILSBY
Don't allow this, Dick. It's the moral equivalent of firing him.

PAXON
Title XI doesn't recognize "moral equivalents". Chaparral has to be treated with equality.
(to the board)
You have to do something tonight. Mr. Woodbury's already agreed to this.

Elliot doesn't reply, but his expression reveals he knows Paxon is right. Another BOARD MEMBER takes the initiative.

BOARD MEMBER
I move the board accepts Mr. Paxon's proposal.

OTHER BOARD MEMBER
I second the motion.

All eyes move to Board President Elliot as he grapples with the moral dilemma. He wraps the ribbon around the Medal and puts it aside.

ELLIOT
All in favor, say "aye".

CUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE THE BOARD CHAMBERS

RICK LATIMER is leaning against the wall by the closed door, listening to the board MAJORITY deciding his future.

MAJORITY
AYE.

ELLIOT (O.S.)
Opposed?

Rick walks away from the door and down the long hallway by himself, unable to hear the lone voice of support.

MR. KILSBY
No.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE - DAY

ANGLE - A BRASS WALL PLAQUE

with "Richard P. Latimer -- Awarded for Distinguished Community Service" inscribed in its face.

Rick places it in the CARDBOARD BOX with the rest of his personal affects, then looks back at his office warmly lit by the late afternoon sun. The CUSTODIANS replace window panes which still say "Latimer Licks Dog Dicks".

He closes the door for the last time.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN OFFICE

RICK carries the box past his secretary, PEGI, who does her best to smile through teary eyes. Rick puts a hand on her shoulder, then continues on past where BYRON KENNEDY stands in his own doorway giving Rick a sympathetic stare reserved for the condemned.

Rick answers it with an unconvincing smile.

RICK
It's just across town, By. Not more than seven or eight miles.

Byron doesn't seem convinced. Mrs. Evers stops Rick from her doorway as he approaches.

MRS. EVERS
I'm sorry. God knows if it wasn't for me.

RICK
It would have been something else.

MRS. EVERS
That's an awful school, Rick. They send all the worst teachers and kids there.

Rick puts his free arm around the black woman.

RICK
But it's still a school. It won't kill me.

He lets her go and, without looking back, walks towards the empty front office, disappearing into the warm afternoon sun with a cardboard box under his arm.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

MUSIC and MAIN TITLES over the following:

EXT. A SMALL APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT (DAWN)

ANGLE - A BLACK BOOT

kick starting a Honda Nighthawk MOTORCYCLE to the light of a nearby street lamp. The ROAR of the engine breaks the early morning silence in this middle class apartment neighborhood.

A HELMETED FIGURE rides out the driveway and onto the quiet street under the dark grey sky.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY (DAWN)

The HELMETED FIGURE rides through the clean and empty streets of the city's financial district. A street sweeper looks down from

his noisy truck. A transient sleeps inside the warm entrance to a bank.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AN INNER CITY STREET - DAY (DAWN)

As the streets grow more cluttered with parked cars, litter, and potholes, so do the sidewalks where early risers wait for the long ride to work.

A large black woman with her hand on a cane watches the MOTORCYCLE RIDER go by from her place on a bus bench. So do a group of Mexican men, waiting at a street corner to be chosen for a day's work.

A black man tending a small fenced-in garden stands up to watch the faceless apparition ride by.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ANOTHER STREET

As the dim morning gets brighter, the neighborhood gets poorer. Every house, small or smaller, has METAL BARS on its duct taped windows. Store fronts are boarded up. Every open wall is covered with black, blue, and red gang GRAFFITI.

Riding past the barks of junk yard dogs, where the wind between buildings blows litter rolling across the street in front of him, the faceless rider approaches a long stretch of high chain linked fence with barbed wire running along its top.

Behind the fence are acres of asphalt with yellow flowered weeds growing up through the cracks.

The motorcyclist comes to a stop across the street from the fence's LOCKED GATE. Through the tinted helmet shield he looks at the sign on the gate: "CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL - Gate Open During Regular School Hours - 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Helmeted Figure checks his watch, then turns off his engine. MUSIC and MAIN TITLES come to an end so that the only sound is the wind and the distant traffic from the city's center.

Across the empty parking lot inside the fence, the old brick SCHOOL BUILDING stands by itself, covered with the same kinds of graffiti that blemish the rest of the neighborhood.

The rider starts to take off his HELMET when--

--one, two, then three WHITE TEENAGERS burst out from around the corner, running as if for their lives in all directions.

One runs past us. One disappears. The third and especially UGLY ONE, with brown ratty hair and a blue jeans jacket, races across the street and starts climbing the gate.

HELMETED RIDER
What the..?

The sound of RICK LATIMER's voice inside the helmet is drowned by the SQUEAL OF TIRES as a red '68 CHEVY IMPALA, full of black faces, rips around the corner and smashes full speed into the GATE the Unkempt White is climbing on.

The White falls onto and rolls over the speeding hood which continues on through the fence and across the empty parking lot.

Rick revs up his motorcycle and speeds through the torn open gate, several hundred feet behind the Impala dragging a section of SPARKING FENCE across the asphalt with an ugly white teenager still holding onto it.

The Impala fishtails. The white teenager rolls off the chain links and onto some dead grass where he jumps to his feet and runs to the back of the school building. Three BLACK TEENAGERS burst from the car and start chasing, two with LEAD PIPES, one with a CRESCENT WRENCH. The DRIVER shouts instructions from the car.

BLACK DRIVER
Just kill 'im. That's all.

Picking up full speed across the broken asphalt parking lot, Rick follows on his motorcycle past the Impala to the back of the school.

CUT TO:

THE LUNCH AREA

where the three BLACKS, wearing red shoelaces and red bandanas in their back pockets, are just about to corner the UNKEMPT WHITE inside the open vending machine cage.

RICK plows past two of them on his motorcycle. One stops, confused at seeing him.

BLACK ASSAILANT
(to Rick)
Hey!! Who you be with?!

Rick skids to a stop between the unkempt white, who's fallen to the ground in front of the drink machine, and the last charging black, a little heavier than his friends, coming at him with a CRESCENT WRENCH.

WRENCH BEARER
He white! He with him!

The still faceless Rick flips the WRENCH BEARER over the back of his motorcycle into the plate glass of a "TOMM'S" SNACK MACHINE!

The Unkempt White rushes to thrust a twelve inch KITCHEN KNIFE into the gut of the fallen wrench bearer.

A kick with Rick's boot and the knife is flying as are the rest of the blacks save the wrench bearing fat boy screaming after them from his seat in the snack machine.

WRENCH BEARER
Get your ass back, niggers!!

He makes one last lunge at the unkempt White before Rick grabs his wrench hand and bangs it against the machine. Rick picks the two up by their Levi's jacket and bloodied tee-shirt so that their ugly white and baby fat black faces are close to his helmet.

RICK
Have you two had enough?!

He throws them both onto the seat of a LUNCH TABLE. The Unkempt White wipes his bleeding nose. BABY FAT EMILE wipes his bleeding head.

BABY FAT EMILE
Man?! Who you think you are?!!

Rick takes off his helmet revealing his face for the first time. He throws the helmet into Emile's chest, then answers his question between breaths.

RICK
The principal.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL PARKING LOT

The school day begins early as several cars pull into the parking lot near where the Red Impala had stopped.

Assistant Principal ROBERT DARCY climbs out of his Ford Falcon at the same time HILARY OROZCO, an attractive young hispanic woman, climbs out a blue '81 Toyota CELICA.

They look at each other like two enemies who find themselves together in an elevator. Hilary breaks the tension with politeness.

HILARY
Mr. Darcy.

DARCY
Morning.

They both notice the SKID MARKS, the torn stretch of CHAIN LINK FENCE, and the leather-jacketed RICK LATIMER escorting two struggling students toward the main building.

HILARY
Well. So much for your "unwritten agreement".

Darcy slams his door closed as if he recognizes him.

CUT TO:

RICK

asking directions from an early arriving LATINO BOY outside the main entrance.

RICK
The principal's office. Where is it?

BABY FAT EMILE
Don't tell him, asshole.

The boy looks at the restrained black gang member with a surprised defiance. He answers by pointing up to a second story window. Rick pulls the two inside the building.

EMILE (CON'T)
(to Latino Boy)
Dead asshole!

CUT TO:

INT. CHAPARRAL PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Through a row of clear windows that keep it separate from the main office -- one window, now only a board -- we see the arriving SECRETARIES watching from their desks as RICK manhandles the combatants past them all and into his new office.

They continue to watch him through the windows as he pushes the two into empty chairs, then sits down himself, catching his breath.

RICK
Gentlemen. We can sit here all day.

EMILE
Fuck you.

RICK
What was that?

WHITE ZAC
That's his name. "Fuck You".

EMILE
Yeah. But you just call me "Fuck".
(pointing to White Zac)
And call this ugly asshole "White Zac". His whole name be too long to say.

RICK
Say it anyway.

EMILE
White Zac of Shit.

After a short pause, Rick picks up the large KITCHEN KNIFE he'd laid on his desk and looks straight at White Zac.

RICK
Tell me, Mr. Shit. Do you always bring one of these to school?

WHITE ZAC
When Victor Duncan has it out to kill me, I do.

Emile glares at White Zac as if he'd broken some unwritten law.

EMILE
You shit...

Secretary DOROTHY JENKINS, a white woman in her fifties who looks like a throwback to the same era, sticks her head in the open door.

MS. JENKINS
Uh, Mr. Latimer. Assistant Principal Darcy is here.

Still holding the kitchen knife, Rick looks over as ROBERT DARCY, an intense man of small stature, enters the office, his eyes moving from the knife to White Zac and Emile, bloodied at the head and nose respectively.

Rick puts the knife down to extend his hand.

RICK
Mr. Darcy. Rick Latimer. I'm the new principal.

But Rick has his eyes fixed instead on the beautiful HILARY OROZCO who's steps into the office behind Darcy.

DARCY
From Sycamore. I was hoping to speak with you before--
(he looks at the wounded)
--this.

RICK
Bad planning I'm sure. In the meantime I want a "Victor Duncan" brought in to my office.

DARCY
That's not as simple as it--

EMILE
Motherfucker!

Emile lunges and swings his fist into White Zac's face.

EMILE (CON'T)
Be the last time you say his name.

The Secretaries stand from their chairs to look in on the fist fight which lasts only a few seconds before Rick pulls them apart, barely missing a word in his instructions to Darcy.

RICK
And expulsion papers filed on Mr. Shit and Mr. Fuck here as well as a phone call to the police.

DARCY
Now just a minute. Let's take our time here.

JOE PHILLIPS, the black and stocky head of security, rushes in from his office in time to see Rick throw the two back down into their chairs causing Emile to fall backwards in his.

Hilary picks up the telephone and starts dialing. Emile wipes blood off his face with a grin that becomes a giggle.

EMILE
Expulsion. That a good one, Ricky.

Hilary hands the receiver to Rick from which we can faintly hear, "Central Police, May I Help You?" Darcy slams his hand on the BUTTON. He turns to Joe Phillips.

DARCY
Joe. Keep an eye on these two.
(to Rick)
Could we speak privately?

Rick hesitates, but sees no reason to resist. He looks to Phillips, who gives him a reassuring nod, then to Hilary before walking out with Assistant Principal Darcy.

CUT TO:

INT. ROBERT DARCY'S OFFICE

With great urgency, ROBERT DARCY opens the door for RICK then escorts him to the window overlooking the parking lot and front entrance.

DARCY
Look at them, Rick.

Darcy is pointing down to the mostly black and hispanic students hanging around and playing in front of the school before going in. Some GANG MEMBERS stand out prominently.

DARCY (CON'T)
Those are the students at Chaparral. Some of this city's worst juvenile offenders. I take that back. Some of this city's worst criminals.

RICK
What are you getting at Mr. Darcy?

DARCY
They leave us alone, Rick. They don't touch us. And do you think it's because they like us?

Rick takes a good long look at Darcy.

RICK
No.

DARCY
You're right. They hate us. Teachers. Counselors. Principals. They hate us all. They'd love to rape and beat us up on a daily basis. But we have an agreement. It's not something we all sat down and signed, but something that evolved as this school became the dumping ground for the worst in the district. And part

of that agreement is we don't bring in the police. We take care of "school matters" in school.

RICK
Then take care of them.

Rick starts back to the door. Darcy grabs Rick by the arm.

DARCY
Expulsions don't leave Chaparral. They arrive. From Condit. From Mountain View. You might even recognize some of your own. Maybe some of the white kids trying to move in on Victor Duncan.

Rick pulls his arm away.

RICK
Who nearly had them killed for it.

DARCY
It wouldn't be the first time.

RICK
Then I don't want people like that in my school.

DARCY
Neither do I. But everyone else in this city does. The streets are a little safer six hours a day.

RICK
This is a school. Not a detention house.

DARCY
It's a school building, yes. But how many kids are learning anything? How many don't speak English? You know we can't even hold an assembly here without it becoming a gang war?

Rick takes a long look at Darcy, then walks to the door.

DARCY (CON'T)
Do you still want me to file those expulsion papers? The district won't even review them without live witnesses.

Rick turns around to answer while Darcy continues.

DARCY (CON'T)
A rarity at Chaparral.

Rick shakes his head his head "no", then walks out, not quite sure what to do next.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL HALLWAYS

In the long hallway crowded with predominantly black and latino students, RICK walks down the center, passing with every step an infraction that would earn a suspension or expulsion at Sycamore.

A groups of black girls blast a ghetto radio while they take turns dancing with each other.

Three scuzzed-out white guys smoking sherman cigarettes play "Bloody Knuckles" with a metal comb.

Latino gang members pitch quarters into a drinking fountain near where a latino couple lean against the lockers with their tongues down each other's throats.

The guy puts his hand up her sweater, exposing her breast under his fingers. The girl discreetly pulls the sweater down over the event.

Rick takes in these varied incidents in this hall of utter chaos without action, his anger building with each one until a WHITE KID on a SKATE BOARD rounds the corner at full speed.

WHITE KID
Out of my way, faggot.

Rick slams his foot in the center of the board sending the kid flying over the front.

WHITE KID (CON'T)
Asswipe!

The kid jumps to his feet and pulls his fist back. Rick pushes him aside like little white curtain as when he's suddenly distracted by a long line of students, most of them boys, waiting to get into the GIRLS' REST ROOM.

Rick walks to the front of the line. A bleach blonde LATINO GIRL protests.

LATINO GIRL
Hey! No cuts!

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS' REST ROOM

RICK marches into the crowded smoke-filled rest room where TREENA LESTER, an attractive but forceful black girl, sits in a stall dispensing single SHERMAN CIGARETTES from a CAFETERIA TRAY resting on a stool.

TREENA
Quarters only. And if you wanna leave a tip, I won't argue.
(to Rick's legs)
Back of the line, asshole.

RICK
What class are you supposed to be in?

She looks up at the sound of an adult voice. Rick picks up a cigarette from the tray and smells the tip. He grimaces.

TREENA
How should I know? The teachers have the lists.

Rick picks up the entire TRAY full of Cigarettes and Quarters, pulls Treena off the TOILET by her wrist, then dumps the tray into the toilet, flushing it with his foot.

TREENA (CON'T)
Hey! What're you doing?!

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAY

RICK pulls the screaming TREENA from the rest room to a guarded "TEACHERS LOUNGE" DOOR. He tries it. It's locked.

RICK
Open it.

TREENA
Ouch! God! Let go of me.

The young GUARD fumbles with his set of keys while Treena pounds on the large hand that holds her wrist.

CUT TO:

INT. THE TEACHER'S LOUNGE

Nearly all the two dozen or so teachers, mostly white but a racial mix, look up from their magazines, newspapers, coffee, and machine dispensed snacks when their new principal bursts in with the squirming TREENA LESTER in his hand.

RICK
This young lady was selling cigarettes soaked in embalming fluid, across a noisy hallway, during school hours.

TREENA
Auugghh!! Get your hands off me, prick.

Rick surveys the dead faces of the teachers who find their only day's peace in the guarded lounge furnished with moth-eaten couches and a view of the parking lot. He also sees HILARY OROZCO the beautiful latino woman who dialed the police looking at him from her place by the window.

Treena starts hitting him in the stomach. He doesn't flinch.

RICK
Why?

Not one of them answers. Rick catches the eye of MRS. RECTOR an older teacher whose hands shakes as she knits.

MRS. RECTOR
Why are you asking us? We're on free period.

Rick can't believe what he's hearing. He looks again to Hilary who still doesn't respond. She seems to be observing him, checking out how he'll handle this situation.

MR. NOFSINGER, a fat man, nervously turns the pages of a newspaper. He notices Rick staring straight at him.

MR. NOFSINGER
Don't look at me. I do what I can.

Treena continues to struggle in the principal's hand, now almost crying.

RICK
What class is she supposed to be in?

Still no answer. Rick lets her go, as if he had no right to hold her with teachers like this.

JACK HARTER, a social studies teacher who seems to hate himself for being scared, slowly stands up from the couch to speak for the group.

MR. HARTER
What do you want us to do, Mr. Latimer?

RICK
Just give a shit. That's all.

Harter thinks it over for a moment.

MR. HARTER
That's not as easy as it sounds.

MR. NOFSINGER
Do you want us to end up like Howard Sullivan?

Nofsinger doesn't explain. Rick looks to Harter.

MR. HARTER
He tried to get everyone to care. Then ended up in the Veteran's hospital with battle fatigue.

MR. NOFSINGER
No. We don't get paid enough to "give a shit".

Jack Harter nods in reluctant agreement. The other teachers follow suit except for Hilary Orozco who simply stares at Rick, waiting for his next move.

RICK
Tomorrow at this time, there'll be an all-school assembly in the auditorium.

A hush of outrage spreads through the room.

MR. HARTER
An assembly?! Don't you understand?

MR. NOFSINGER
Why?!

RICK
I like the attention.

Hilary smiles at the joke, then goes back to correcting her journals.

MR. HARTER
You can't do this. Didn't Mr. Darcy tell you?

MR. NOFSINGER
Excuse me if I sit this one out.

RICK
And since this is your "free period" everyone here will help seat the students, or have hall duty for the rest of the semester.

MR. HARTER
You want us all in the hospital!

MR. NOFSINGER
The hospital? The morgue!

RICK
If that's what it takes to make you give a shit.

Rick turns away amidst the flurry of protests. When he opens the door, he hears a distant and muffled SCREAM.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAY

Outside the teachers' lounge, RICK is immediately met by the door GUARD, and JOE PHILLIPS extending his hand.

PHILLIPS
Principal Latimer. Joe Phillips, head of security. We've checked most of the classrooms already.

Another scream, clearly male in pitch, rings faintly through the hallway.

RICK
It's outside the building.

Rick leads the other two men down the hallway past the students who've stopped whatever they were doing to listen to the eerie cries of anguish.

Rick pushes open the double doors at the end of the hallway.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

Followed by a few curious students, RICK, JOE PHILLIPS, and two other GUARDS, pause for a moment before following the next SCREAM in barely audible Spanish from a building across the campus.

SCREAM
Ayudeme!! Bajame!! Aye Dios Mio!!

PHILLIPS
Industrial Arts.

The four men run in the direction of a newer and separate building across the parking lot. The next scream is louder, completely extinguishing the faint sound of traffic from the center of the city.

SCREAM
Dios!! Dios!! Ayudeme!!

The large garage door is open on the auto mechanics side of the building but the late morning sun makes it impossible to see inside. The next scream is closer and clearer, but unquestionably softer through that open door to the building.

SCREAM
Aye Dios Moi! Aye Dios Moi...

CUT TO:

INT. INDUSTRIAL ARTS BUILDING

RICK, PHILLIPS, and the other two GUARDS stop where six very frightened LATINO STUDENTS silently work on a '66 Corvair Spider. They look up guiltily from their project.

Rick waits for another scream, but another scream doesn't come.

RICK
All right. Who's the wise ass?

The Latino students look at each other, then to the principal with a shrug. Rick eyes them suspiciously then walks past into the empty wood and metal shop sections of the building.

CUT TO:

INT. WOOD AND METAL SHOP

The three guards follow RICK into the empty shop which offers no clue as to the source of the scream.

RICK
Come on out. The joke's over.

Rick is just about to walk back to the mechanics when the door guard alerts him.

GUARD
Mr. Latimer!

The young guard is pointing to a POOL OF BLOOD, all by itself on the sawdust covered floor. Rick walks over to it, unable to ascertain its source until a SINGLE DROP falls from above.

We follow Rick's gaze up between the rows of Fluorescent lights to the upside down face of the LATINO BOY who had earlier given him directions to the principal's office.

Hung upside-down from a ceiling pulley, his hands and feet are stretched back to the legs of a SAWHORSE and held tight at the wrists and ankles with the BARBED WIRE from the ploweg-down front gate. The boy bleeds profusely where the barbs dig into his skin.

Rick is paralyzed for a moment looking up at the crucified Latino Boy whose unconscious eyes hang open.

RICK
On God...

PHILLIPS
Eric! Get an ambulance and some cutters! Will! Help me get him down!

Rick marches back into the auto shop where the group of Latinos still work on the car.

CUT TO:

INT. THE AUTO SHOP

He picks up a heavy socket wrench.

RICK
I want names and I want 'em now!

The latinos look very scared but say nothing. They just stand and watch as their new principal makes a huge dent in the hood with the wrench.

RICK (CON'T)
Now!!

ARTURO DIEGO, a little smaller than the others and wearing a B. Kliban "Cat" Shirt starts to say something, but stops.

Rick pounds the hood again, making another large dent to which Arturo reacts as if it were a personal injury.

HILARY OROZCO appears in the door backlit by the bright sun.

Rick sees her for only a brief moment before Joe Phillips calls him in from where they've lowered the young victim.

PHILLIPS
Mr. Latimer! Come here.

Rick gives the latinos a threatening glance before marching back to where Joe Phillips points down to the unconscious victim's t-shirt which has felt-penned on it: "WELCOME TO CHAPARRAL RICKY".

Another guard does his best to attend the injuries.

PHILLIPS (CON'T)
It's for you.
(to the guard)
Cut the wire from the wood. We don't want him losing anymore blood.

HILARY OROZCO, takes off the jacket of her blue suit and drapes it over the fourteen year old-boy still lying barb-wired to the sawhorse, but now regaining consciousness.

HILARY
(to Rick)
Help me, please. Hold him off the sawhorse.

Rick kneels down on the other side of her. Hilary takes Rick's hands and puts them under the boy's shoulders and back so that his face and hers are nearly touching.

The Latino Boy starts speaking to Hilary as if he knew her.

LATINO BOY
Porque me hici ero esto?

RICK
What did he say?

HILARY
"Why did they do this to me?"

RICK
Who did this?

Hilary asks the boy in Spanish while she wipes sweat off his forehead with a handkerchief.

HILARY
Quien te hiso eso?

The boy shakes his head as best he can. A distant ambulance SIREN approaches.

LATINO BOY
Yo no ve. Yo no ve.

HILARY
He didn't see.

PHILLIPS
No one sees Victor.

HILARY
They're just boys. They're scared.

Hilary comforts the boy in spanish.

HILARY (CON'T)
Tu estas segure. Tu vas estar bien.
Solo descansa.

The boy grimaces at the loud SNAP of cutting wire. When the SIREN grows its loudest outside the open garage door, we--

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

--and the ROAR of twenty-five hundred students being led into the heretofore unused school auditorium. The teachers leading them in do their best to keep their groups together but once inside, the steady flow of students quickly coagulates into groups of friends, cliques, and most noticeably -- because of their distinct racial make-up and dress -- youth gangs.

ANGLE - WHITE ZAC

sitting inside a Small Gang of the school's only WHITES, keeping his eyes on HILARY leading students in through a side door.

He whispers to his white friend, ROLF.

WHITE ZAC
We should get some teachers. Sell a little grass, a little ass. For a little extra cash.

Rolf, who despite his acne looks like he could have earned a part in "Triumph of the Will", isn't listening. He's rubbing the shoulder of TREENA LESTER sitting by herself in front of them.

ROLF
Hey colored lady. C'mon and work with us. We have an opening that needs to be filled.

WHITE ZAC
(to Treena)
That is, if you have one too.

White Zac and Rolf laugh at their joke until the louder, forced laughter from behind makes them turn around to see--

--EMILE and several dozen members of the black gang have taken ALL THE SEATS surrounding them.

ROLF
Oh shit...

ANGLE - THE STAGE

where the MICROPHONE on a STAND is the day's only entertainment.

RICK walks to it from the back of the stage and stops, saying nothing, looking out into faces of the noisy crowd.

From this vantage he sees the hundred different types that go to Chaparral, not just the more obvious delinquents and junior criminals, but also the regular students who keep to themselves, trying their best to learn and survive in a school neglected by the people they invest their limited trust.

By now, most everyone has seen Rick standing alone on the stage, ominous in that he hasn't said a word. Some of the students hoot at him yelling stupid little phrases like, "Are you gonna sing for us, Frankie?" and "How 'bout a dance instead?"

After an excruciating long moment, Rick finally speaks.

RICK
I am not here to promote the value of education.

The end of the sentence is lost in a wave of hoots and catcalls. Rick looks off stage making a gesture to turn up the volume.

RICK (CON'T)
And I'm not here--

This time he's twice as loud as the loudest catcall.

RICK (CON'T)
--to make this a school again by drumming spirit with catch phrases like "We Care", "School First", or "I Love Chaparral".

Most all the students have capitulated to the Principal's louder voice except the few who yell, "Then what are you here for? To beat off on stage?"

RICK (CON'T)
I just have two words for you: "No More".

A Latino student shoots up out of his seat.

LATINO
I've got two words for you, man:
"Fuck You!".

A short wave of laughter moves through the auditorium. Rick continues, ignoring the interruption.

RICK (CON'T)
No more missing classes. No more loitering in the hallways. No more gambling. No more extortion. No more selling drugs on campus. No more gang intimidation. Arson. Rape. Robbery. Whatever your specialty. No more.

While Rick speaks he notices a BLACK FIGURE standing in the double-doorway at the back of the auditorium, silhouetted by the light from the hallway.

RICK (CON'T)
I know what most of you are thinking now. That cocky son of a bitch doesn't know what he's talking about. This is Chaparral. I know that. I know you can't expel students from Chaparral. But then the same goes for principals. You can't expel me either.

Rick notices the figure at the back of the auditorium slowly walking down the aisle.

RICK (CON'T)
So while at any other school I can't lay a hand on you, here I'll do whatever it takes to enforce my simple rule: No more.

After a short silent moment, a black freshman starts clapping in the front row. This sets more than half the auditorium into a somewhat timid applause which is soon complimented with a stream of hisses.

Rick turns his attention from the audience to the figure walking down the aisle where the light from the stage reveals it to be the toughest and dirtiest looking young black man one would ever hope to see. With an intense expression and a presumably large afro stuffed into an old maroon sweater cap, the TOUGH BLACK continues walking with his deep stare locked on the principal's.

RICK (CON'T)
Get back in your seat.

He doesr't. Rick motions to a white GUARD standing to the side of the stage.

RICK (CON'T)
Take care of this.

The guard doesn't move. He stands petrified at the sight of the tough looking Black who's stopped about ten yards in front of the stage to look Principal Latimer straight in the face.

TOUGH BLACK
You talk too much, White Boy.

Angry at the affront, Rick starts to climb down from the stage. The Tough Black thrusts his hand out to the side.

Rick stops for a moment, waiting to see what he's going to do, then continues down from the stage.

The Tough Black reels off a series of complex HAND SIGNALS causing the BLACK GANG to suddenly attack the WHITES with a war cry.

In a matter of seconds the orderly assembly becomes a full scale riot.

Frightened students start pushing their way through the exit. Curious students push to the center to get a better look. The Tough Black who started it all disappears as both aisles are now flooded with chaos.

The security guards and two large MALE TEACHERS start their way in to the center along with Rick who has jumped down from the stage to meet them in eye of the hurricane.

Some combatants, both white and black, lay bleeding on the floor between the folding chairs.

The outnumbered security guards pull combatants apart. Rick does the same until he comes face to face with JOE PHILLIPS amidst the melee.

RICK (CON'T)
Was that--?

PHILLIPS
Forget it. Leave him alone.

Rick starts pushing his way through the students towards the auditorium exit.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAYS

Safe from the riot inside the auditorium, students push their way through hallway to wherever they're going next. RICK does the same, spotting the tough BLACK FIGURE walking down the center of the hall in front of him, students parting to get out of his way.

Rick pushes through until he is near enough to call out.

RICK
Victor!

The tough black figure of VICTOR DUNCAN turns around slowly to greet the new principal with a long intense stare. Rick stops ten feet short of him, studying the dark and icy visage of perhaps the most vicious human being he's ever seen.

RICK (CON'T)
Jesus (Hay-zuse) Martinez dislocated both his shoulders.

Victor thinks about this for a moment, rubbing his chin down with his hand as if he had a beard.

RICK (CON'T)
And nearly bled to death.

Victor remains silent, still rubbing his chin, acting confused by what Rick just said.

VICTOR
Hay-zuse? Man, I thought it was Jesus.
(he smiles, slowly and broadly).
My mistake.

Still smiling, Victor starts to walk away again. Rick follows him through the captivated students.

RICK
I can't get you for yesterday, Victor. But I want you out of this school.

Victor turns slowly towards Rick who stops only a few feet in front of him. The crowd around them hushes.

VICTOR
You want me out of this school?

RICK
You heard me.

Victor clicks a SWITCHBLADE from his pocket and waves it past Rick's unflinching face.

VICTOR
Well, boy. If you want me out of this school--

With a quick movement, Victor flips the switchblade around and extents it to Rick by the handle.

VICTOR (CON'T)
--you'll need this.

Rick takes the blade from his hand and, for a split second, considers using it. Victor smiles.

VICTOR (CON'T)
'Cause this school is my place. And I make the rules.

Rick looks down at the Switchblade he's left holding while we follow Victor ambling away through the crowd with a grin.

The CLATTER OF METAL makes Victor look to the floor where the SWITCHBLADE comes to rest, bloodied and broken in two pieces.

He looks back at Rick who stares at him with bleeding hand.

RICK
Not anymore.

Rick turns and walks away to his office. Victor picks up the switchblade halves and wipes the blood off. This new principal is different.

CUT TO:

EXT. A NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

It is late in the afternoon when RICK rides his MOTORCYCLE along a quiet resedential street, pulling into the driveway of a small, plain HOUSE with a very well-tended garden in front.

He takes off his helmet as he walks to the front door, then allows himself a moment to compose himself before knocking on it.

No answer.

He walks around to the driveway to see if there's a car in the garage, but instead see a white TEENAGER with an incredibly loud POWER BLOWER strapped to his back, blowing leaves down toward the street. Rick tries to get his attention.

RICK
Excuse me.

But a WALKMAN on the boy's ears prevents him from hearing anything but the fifth track on the latest "Motley Crue" album.

Rick switches off the smoky blower from behind. The kid doesn't hear it but eventually notices the leaves aren't moving. He whips around.

TEENAGER
(pulling off his headphones)
Hey! What's the idea?

RICK
I'm looking for Joe Latimer.

TEENAGER
He ain't here.

The kid starts to put on his earphones again when Rick stops his hand.

RICK
Where is he?

TEENAGER
At the library. He'll be back by five 'cause he has to pay me.

Rick checks his watch.

RICK
All right. Would you give him a message for me? It's only two sentences.

The kid nods his head, noticing Rick's bandaged hand but not saying anything.

RICK (CON'T)
Tell him his son Rick came by.

TEENAGER
Really? Man, I should ask for your autograph the way he comes out here and talks about you all the time.

Rick is mildly amused but not surprised.

RICK
And tell him I've been transferred to Chapparal High.

The boy gulps with wide eyes.

Rick climbs back on his motorcycle. The teenager steps up to him again for an answer to a burning question.

TEENAGER
Hey. Is it really true all the kids at Chaparral carry a gun?

Rick looks at the teenager's sincerity and belief in the popular myth. He shakes his head.

RICK
No. Just the principal.

Rick pats the front of his leather jacket to suggest a gun underneath. The kids eyes bulge. Rick puts on his helmet and takes off.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN OFFICE - DAY

In the small public waiting area, the heavy-set black head of security, JOE PHILLIPS, defends himself to Assistant Principal DARCY in the presence of three young, almost boyish, SECURITY GUARDS.

PHILLIPS
He told us to wait here.

DARCY
And I told you to get back to your posts. Do you know what could happen after that assembly stunt yesterday?

RICK bursts in through the office door with two muscular and heavy set male P.E. TEACHERS in his footsteps.

DARCY
Latimer. I want a word with you.

Rick ignores him while he glances past the three not-so-heavy set young guards waiting with Joe Phillips.

RICK
I said the <u>entire</u> security force.

PHILLIPS
Yeah.

After studying Phillips' sincere face, Rick realizes he's looking at the entire security force.

RICK
Oh God... We'll need more.

The "entire" security force stands up and follows Rick and the two teachers into the office area where Rick still ignores Darcy, stopping by the desk of Darcy's secretary, MS. JENKINS.

RICK (CON'T)
Every assistant from the athletic department. Every student's class schedule. And every attendance sheet. Bring 'em all into my office.

MS. JENKINS
But don't you think--

RICK
No. Bring 'em in.

DARCY
Latimer!

Rick finally acknowledges Darcy as he makes his way to his office with his entourage.

RICK
That's "Mr. Latimer", Darcy. Put these two men on temporary payroll as security guards.

DARCY
What?

RICK
That's right. They've been deputized.

DARCY
But they're teachers.

RICK
Big teachers. They deserve medals after my "assembly stunt" yesterday.

The big teachers smile at the assistant principal as they file into Rick's small office with the other guards.

CUT TO:

Joe Phillips thinks about it for a moment, then nods his head in ascension.

PHILLIPS
Let's do it.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN HALLWAY

The usual melee. Students go about their business pitching quarters, smoking, playing loud music, and engaging in public foreplay.

KEVIN ARBURTHA, a black student and a member of Victor's gang, lets a Sherman Cigarette drop from his mouth when he looks down the hall.

KEVIN
Fuuuuck...

REVERSE ANGLE and we see what he sees--

--A WALL OF SEVEN SECURITY GUARDS moving down like a tidal wave, swallowing up truant students never to be seen in the hallways again.

Kevin and two of his black friends take off through the double-door exit.

A group of blonde latino girls escape into a nearby rest room.

ANGLE - BEHIND THE WALL OF GUARDS

where the large P.E. TEACHER turned guard pushes two white truants up against the lockers.

P.E. TEACHER
Chris Hopkins and Terry Wolfe.

JOE PHILLIPS checks the class lists and marks them off.

MS. JENKINS
Rooms 203 and 224.

The P.E. teacher takes them away by their collars.

CUT TO:

INT. THE GIRLS' ROOM

The group of LATINO GIRLS scream as TWO GUARDS walk in with impunity to pluck them out of their smoke-filled sanctuary.

CUT TO:

INT. A CLASSROOM

Teacher, JACK HARTER, looks up from his desk when a ANOTHER GUARD bursts in with two TRUANTS squirming in his hands.

GUARD
Here to deliver Franklin Wright and Maria Lopez.

The guard pushes the two students into two empty seats.

MR. HARTER
Tell Latimer I don't want 'em. They're too far behind.

GUARD
Then start over.

The class laughs as the guard walks out the door and back to the front lines.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CENTRAL QUAD

JOE PHILLIPS and another guard chase a small but quick LATINO BOY into the lunch area then on into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL KITCHEN

The two guards run in to find the kitchen full of truants of all colors taking refuge amongst the school cooks going about their business.

PHILLIPS
Yep. Too many cooks here.

The two start rounding them up.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN HALLWAY

The hallway is jammed with students passing between classes like any other school. It starts to thin out as they disappear into their assigned rooms for the period.

When the BELL RINGS, the magnificent seven SECURITY GUARDS move down the hallway swallowing another round of truants.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

RICK examines a stack of ATTENDANCE SHEETS while JOE PHILLIPS, looking somewhat uneasy, is now the only guard sitting in front of the principal's desk.

PHILLIPS
Yeah. Most of them stuck to their schedule after the first time. They knew we'd just get 'em again.

RICK
Any problems with Victor?

Phillips hesitates but answers truthfully.

PHILLIPS
No.

Rick looks up from his desk, knowing he's not getting the entire picture.

PHILLIPS (CON'T)
We don't make problems with Victor.

RICK
Where is he?

PHILLIPS
Where he always is: In the alley between the physical plant and the maintenance garage. Now he's selling refuge there at five dollars per person per day. Making a living off your new program.

RICK
How many students've bought refuge?

PHILLIPS
Maybe twenty. But most of them are sherm-heads. Gang bangers. You could be generous and call them "students".

RICK
I will, as long as they're on these sheets. Why didn't you clear them out?

Phillips hesitates as if he's finally going to say what's been on his mind.

PHILLIPS
Because I can't ask my men to do that. And they wouldn't if I did.

Rick stares at Phillips in disbelief.

RICK
Then I'll ask them.

PHILLIPS
(shaking his head)
Please. Last Spring one of them got a knife in his neck making a drug bust in there. They all know how unprotected they are between those walls. And even if they got them out, how are they supposed to handle that many people? They're not police. They're just guys. They don't get paid much.

Rick doesn't have an answer. He just stares at Phillips, thinking. He stands up and looks out the window.

PHILLIPS (CON'T)
I really like what you're doing here. You don't know how long I've been waiting to see this. But sometimes you gotta compromise.

Phillips waits for Rick's answer as he continues his stare across the school yard.

RICK
Yes. I suppose you're right about that.

Rick leaves the window looking straight at Phillips.

RICK (CON'T)
But this isn't one of those times.

Rick walks past Phillips out his office door. Phillips reluctantly follows his commander and chief.

CUT TO:

EXT. VICTOR'S ALLEY - DAY

ANGLE - A PAIR OF BLACK HANDS

passing out a stack of FIVE DOLLAR BILLS as if they were cards in a poker game.

JOJO, and KEVIN -- present at White Zac's attack -- pick up, their share off the orange crate while VICTOR wraps a rubber band around the remainder.

Jojo points to a curtain in the back of the alley behind which a couple can be heard making love.

JOJO
What about her?

Victor looks back to the noisy curtain, thinks about it, then pulls one FIVE DOLLAR BILL from his own stack.

VICTOR
Where's baby fat Emile?

KEVIN
He go to class this time.

VICTOR
Why?

JOJO
Who knows? Maybe the nigger be liking that shit.

Victor stares ahead with quiet anger as he pockets Emile's stack. He notices a commotion from the other end of the crowded alley.

VICTOR
(to Jojo)
Go check that.

Jojo hops to his feet. We follow him as he passes truant students playing PEA AND SHELL gambling games, dipping cigarettes into a some sort of chemical then laying them out to dry, sleeping, and just hanging out in the refuge of the alley.

Jojo joins another black GANG MEMBER facing off with RICK at the opening by the basketball courts.

JOJO
What he want?

GANG MEMBER
Say he want us outta the alley. Say it need cleaning.

Jojo looks at Rick, totally dumbfounded.

JOJO
Cleaning?! If you want ta clean it, Mr. Prin-C-Pal, clean us with it.

Jojo puts his hand in his pocket, presumably on a switchblade.

RICK
All right.

Rick steps back just as a FIRE HOSE rounds the corner in the hands of JOE PHILLIPS and the P.E. TEACHER.

JOJO
Sheeiii----!!!!

Before Jojo can get out his last "t", a BLAST OF WATER throws him into the screaming crowd behind.

Utter chaos as everything we saw before is blown into a wet disarray. Realizing there is no safe place inside, soaking students run out past the fire hose marching deeper into the alley.

ANGLE - RICK

and the FIVE OTHER SECURITY GUARDS catching the wet students as they come out and tying them wrist-to-wrist with tightly stretched, old elastic JOCK STRAPS.

ANGLE - THE FIRE HOSE

digging further into the alley, shattering orange crates, and even sending Victor out as well.

Rick grabs the soaking Victor by the arm as he emerges, and pushes him up against the wall.

RICK
Welcome to Chaparral, Victor.

VICTOR
Man, doughboy. You blind.

Phillips calls from inside the alley.

PHILLIPS (O.S.)
Rick! Come here!

Rick pushes Victor over to be tied then walks down the wet and empty alley. TREENA LESTER runs past, crying and holding her blouse over her BARE BREASTS.

A few steps further down the alley, Phillips and the big teacher hold the raging stream aside while a beer-bellied WHITE MAN struggles on one foot to get his wet jeans up.

Rick shoots an angry glance back to Treena running out, then again to her white customer.

He turns the nozzle towards the white man sending him flying into a stack of orange crates. Phillips smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. A CLASSROOM

HILARY OROZCO stops a class discussion for a moment as some of her students stand up to look out the windows at a noisy chain of WET STUDENTS being led across the asphalt.

She tries to cover her annoyance as she goes back to the front of the room.

HILARY
Sit down, please.

Remarkably enough, all of them do. She continues the discussion by pointing to a large MAP OF EUROPE dated 1914.

HILARY (CON'T)
So how could an entire world war which killed thirty-eight million people erupt out of one politically minor assassination?

The class is silent as it thinks. The melee can still be heard outside.

ANGLE - EMILE FORTSON

who's blank expression turns to an odd amazement when he realizes he actually knows the answer. He raises his hand while speaking at the same time.

EMILE
Yeah. I know that shit!

HILARY
Emile?

EMILE
It's like they all be homeboys. Yeah. Germany and Hungry Austria be homeboys on one side and France and England be homeboys on the other side. Homeboys just be lookin' for action, that's all. That dead Archduke? He jus' an excuse for some action.

HILARY
Yes. That's about how it was.

EMILE
It still is. When that Hoo-Rah done killed a Kitchen Boy, we do a drive-by on a Hoo-Rah 'cause the Kitchen Boys, they be on our side.

Hilary nods her head, pleased the student is taking an interest, but still a bit uncomfortable with his candor.

HILARY
That's just what happens when--

EMILE
--Yeah! Like when White Zac here be sellin' Sherms in our hood--

WHITE ZAC rears his ugly head at hearing his name just as RICK bursts in with a soaking VICTOR in his hand.

Victor breaks off towards Emile. He runs his fingers through the front of Emile's hair to hold his head back and lock eyes down the length of his outstretched arm.

VICTOR
Who you with, Baby Fat?

Rick pulls Victor away to an empty seat in the back row.

RICK
Someone saved you a seat, Vicky.

Rick throws Victor into the seat then sits behind him. Victor glares at the back of Emile's head while Hilary glares at Rick.

She continues the class discussion as if nothing happened.

HILARY
Continue Emile.

EMILE
Huh? I wan't sayin' nothin'.

Emile rubs the back of his neck as if he could feel Victor's stare.

WHITE ZAC
Yeah, you were, you lying shit. You were saying you were trying to drive us whites outta the school business 'cause you got your tongue so far up Victor's ass you can taste his breakfast.

The class laughs at Emile. Hilary cuts in.

HILARY
That's excellent description, Zac.
You speak from experience?

The class breaks now laughs at White Zac who stares at Hilary as if he could kill her. He says "fucking bitch" under his breath.

Victor notices this as the BELL RINGS. The class gets up.

HILARY
Wait. Sit down.

The class stays standing as Hilary checks her watch, the clock on the wall frozen for years at 6:00.

HILARY (CON'T)
All right. But I want three more journal pages. From everyone.

The class moans as it moves out. Emile waits timidly by the door for Victor whom Rick taps on the shoulder from behind.

RICK
Try it. If you know how to use a pen.

Victor turns around and assaults Rick with the unexpected grin.

VICTOR
Whatever you say, Ricky.

Getting up, he tips his dirty sweater cap to Hilary, then thrusts Emile out the door.

Hilary is looking at Rick, not as though she were glad to see him, not as if she were angry, but as if she were studying him as a behavior psychologist.

The class clears to empty except for ARTURO DIEGO, one of the latino mechanics during the crucifixion, waiting by her desk.

Rick starts walking to the front, doing his best to hide how captivated he is by this teacher's dark beauty.

RICK
I'm sorry for the disturbance, but you handled it well.

Hilary takes a long look at him, as if disappointed.

HILARY
What is it you're trying to do?

RICK
What do you mean?

Hilary thinks for a moment then, totally out of the blue, picks up a heavy TAPE DISPENSER from her desk and hurls it across the room at Rick. It misses him by a few inches but puts a major dent in the chalk board behind him.

Arturo can't believe what he sees. Neither can Rick.

RICK (CON'T)
What was that?!

HILARY
You're own language. What're you trying to do?

Rick is at a temporary loss for words. Hilary picks up a STAPLER from her desk and readies it for another communication.

RICK
Dammit, I'm doing the best I can. I'm trying to make this a school again.

HILARY
Well it certainly looks like a school. Now that the halls are tidy and the bathrooms empty, you can pretend you never left Sycamore.

Hilary puts down the stapler.

HILARY (CON'T)
Now if you'll excuse me, I have a student.

Arturo looks at the ground, embarrassed by the conflict. Rick doesn't say anything else. He simply walks out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN OFFICE - DAY (MORNING)

When RICK walks into the main office with his HELMET tucked under his arm, MS. JENKINS makes a seemingly redundant announcement.

MS. JENKINS
Mr. Latimer. You have a visitor.

Mr. Darcy's secretary points back to what looks like the entire faculty of Chaparral High School crammed into his office.

RICK
I see.

MS. JENKINS
No. I didn't mean them.

But Rick is already on his way in to his office as if this day were no different.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

RICK walks into a flurry of questions, accusations, and complaints while he takes off his leather jacket to start the day.

MRS. CONKLIN
Mr. Latimer!! Is there any reason--

MR. BROWN
If I have to put up with another--

MS. YAFFE
Please, Mr. Latimer. Do you have to make them all--

Rick taps his Helmet loudly on his desk. The teachers shut up.

RICK
Don't teachers raise their hands?

JACK HARTER speaks up without raising his hand.

MR. HARTER
Mr. Latimer. It's one thing to invite riots with school assemblies, but when you start dumping animals in my classroom--

MRS. RECTOR
Animals? I'd rather have animals. They don't carry knives.

MR. BROWN
Please, Mr. Latimer. Couldn't you just make the students who want to learn come to class? Is that too much to ask?

MRS. KUPFER, a red-haired woman in her mid-thirties, is clearly more emotional than the rest.

MRS. KUPFER
It was getting so much better. Javier stopped talking back to me.

Liz and Stacy started turning in homework. I was finally getting through to them when all of a sudden, six more are seated in my class who have no respect for anything. They throw things. One of them urinated on the floor. Now the whole class is in chaos and no one's learning anything. It's pushed me back to the beginning.

With this more poignant account, the teachers wait for Rick's reply.

RICK
I'm sorry to hear that. It's unfortunate.

MRS. KUPFER
What are you going to do?

RICK
Are those six on your attendance sheet?

MRS. KUPFER
Yes, they are. But--

RICK
Then the law says they have to be in there.

That was the match in the gas tank. Nearly every voice in the room is heard at full volume.

MR. HARTER
Spare us the law!

MS. NINNEMAN
No one complained before you came. No one!

MR. HARTER
What does the law say about Treena Lester dropping out of school after the principal hosed her clothes off?

MRS. RECTOR
My nerves can't take the new ones. They'll short circuit.

RICK
(to Harter)
Why wasn't I told?

MR. KUPFER
They don't have to be in class. They never were before.

Harter doesn't answer. Rick notices MS. KUPFER not able to keep her eyes from welling up with tears. Mrs. Rector tries again.

MRS. RECTOR
There's nothing stopping you from bending the law. It's a matter of tradition at Chaparral.

Rick shoots up from his chair, angrier than ever.

RICK
Now it's a dead tradition. Damn you people. You don't choose your students. You don't take the easy ones, and throw the rest in the garbage. You take what your school gives you and teach them all the best you can. If one's a problem, you deal with him in class. Then you send him to me. If he doesn't go, I'll come and get him. But every student we leave in the hallway, or in the parking lot, or in the alley, is one more brick off the foundation of this institution.

The teachers don't reply. Some of them look down, perhaps realizing he's right. Some stare at him hatefully.

RICK (CON'T)
All I'm asking from you is to have a little courage.

From the back of the jam packed office, one person's loud CLAPPING breaks awkward silence.

Rick can't see who it is until the teachers who look around open a line of sight to a SEVENTY YEAR-OLD MAN, upright and dignified, still clapping proudly and looking directly at Rick.

RICK
Oh God. Dad?

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN OFFICE - DAY

JOE PHILLIPS shakes his head, smiling, as he waits with Rick's seventy year-old father, MR. LATIMER, by the door to the hall.

PHILLIPS
So Rick Latimer has a father. And I figured he'd come down from some mountain in a lighting storm.

Some eavesdropping secretaries laugh as if they'd thought the same thing.

MR. LATIMER
Well he stood as tall as a mountain today. You shoulda heard him. I never made a speech like that when I was a teacher.

Mr. Latimer calls across the main office to RICK speaking privately with Assistant Principal DARCY.

MR. LATIMER (CON'T)
Richard. Let Joe hear a little bit of your speech. Like the good part about the bricks in the foundation.

ANGLE - RICK

who tries to maintain his composure though he is clearly embarrassed. Darcy continues.

DARCY
C'mon, Rick. If I told you about every kid who dropped out I'd be in your office all day.

RICK
Don't shit with me, Darcy. You knew I'd had a run-in with her.

DARCY
Then what are you so upset about?

RICK
I looked at her records. I think the girl has potential.

DARCY
"Potential" won't earn her a living. She's learned that already. Now it's your turn.

Darcy goes back to his office.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

RICK and his old father, MR. LATIMER, walk from the main building to the parking lot.

MR. LATIMER
I didn't mean to drop in unannounced, Richard, but I just couldn't wait to see this new school of yours.

RICK
It's probably not what you expected.

MR. LATIMER
Hell, it's better than I expected. Sure I wish the kids wouldn't write on the walls. You teach them so well they don't know when to stop. But I was getting worried about you in that soft leather chair. I thought you might end up like it.

RICK
It was comfortable.

MR. LATIMER
Comfort is death! A man needs to challenge the world from a hard wooden chair. Now what're you gonna do about this girl dropping out?

RICK
I don't know. It's a difficult situation.

MR. LATIMER
I think a visit to her parents is in order.

RICK
I'm not sure they even care.

MR. LATIMER
Why? Because they're colored?

RICK
Of course not.

MR. LATIMER
There isn't a parent in the world who doesn't want the best for their child.

Mr. Latimer starts to get into his old '68 FIAT.

RICK
The fact is, Dad, given the circumstances there's nothing I can do about it.

Mr. Latimer very suddenly grabs Rick by the shirt and pushes him up against the car.

MR. LATIMER
Don't you ever let me hear you say that. There is always something you can do. You just have to find it. God didn't put you on this earth just so you could stand and scratch your head.
(whining mimic as he gets into his car)
There's nothing I can do about it, Dad. Fa!

Rick smiles at his father making fun of him. He closes the door for him.

MR. LATIMER (CON'T)
Have you heard from Marianne and little Thomas?

RICK
A letter now and then.

MR. LATIMER
Well I tell you. I don't like it. I don't like it one bit. A man shouldn't be away from his child.

Mr. Latimer reaches out the window to straighten Rick's shirt.

MR. LATIMER (CON'T)
Otherwise he has no one to tell what to do. Good bye, Son.

He drives off leaving Rick standing in the parking lot. Rick looks over to his motorcycle nearby.

CUT TO:

EXT. A POOR RESIDENTIAL STREET

RICK stops his motorcycle at the curb to check an address on a piece of scratch paper.

He stops the engine, and parks it near the sign: "Mountain View Housing Project." He starts walking in across an untended lawn between two long concrete structures -- once built with the best

of intentions, now covered in gang graffiti with every other window boarded up.

Rick stops in front of unit #109, the number on the address.

A CHILD'S VOICE
Ha!! Gotchew cornered.

Rick turns around as a small black BOY, about four years-old, lets loose his "Star Trek" Thaser Gun. Half a dozen small plastic COLORED DISKS spin out and bounce off Rick's chest.

SMALL BOY (CON'T)
You're dead.

RICK
I must be.

The three year-old bends down and carefully picks up each valuable disk from the doorstep. Rick turns around to knock on the door but before he can, the small boy is already opening it.

SMALL BOY
Come inside. This is where the other dead people live.

Rick follows the boy in.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT #108

The SMALL BOY pulls up his oversized pants as he leads RICK across a small messy living room, kept dark by the boarded up window, to a cluttered dining table next to the kitchen.

SMALL BOY
Sit here.

RICK
I'm looking for Treena Lester.

SMALL BOY
She's dead too. Sit here.

Rick sits down at the table. The boy goes to the refrigerator, takes out a pitcher of Hawaiian Punch, and pours it into two cups on the kitchen counter.

RICK
Is she here now?

SMALL BOY
She just come home.

The boy gives Rick his cup, then sits down across from him to enjoy his own refreshment. Rick drinks, obligingly.

RICK
I'd like to speak with her.

Without leaving his seat, the boy yells at the top of his lungs.

SMALL BOY
MOM!!

No answer. A BABY starts crying in a back room. The boy leaves the table taking a few steps down the hall.

SMALL BOY (CON'T O.S.)
MOOOOOMMM!! There's a man here--

He's cut short by a WHACKING sound and TREENA's voice.

TREENA (O.S.)
Little shit! You woke him up.

The boy comes running back, crying.

SMALL BOY
You didn't have to hit me about it.

He hides behind Rick. Treena comes out holding a crying baby.

TREENA
Who the fu--?

She sees Rick. Rick stands up.

TREENA (CON'T)
Who do you want?

Rick says nothing for the moment, still in shock from learning the boy's parentage.

TREENA (CON'T)
So I have a kid. So what?

RICK
Is the baby yours too?

TREENA
No it's my sister's, if it be any of your business. Now you get out of here 'fore someone sees you.

RICK
Where's your sister?

TREENA
At work. Where no one squirts her with a fire hose.

The little boy, who's stopped crying, hands Rick the "Star Trek" gun and the six DISKS he shot out of it. Rick loads them back in the gun for him while he speaks with his mother.

RICK
I'll make a deal with you, Treena. If you start going to your classes in the morning, I'll let you come home in the afternoon, and take care of the kids.

TREENA
I gotta work in the morning. I'm dropping out, that's all. I'm old enough.

RICK
When does work start?

TREENA
Leave me alone.

RICK
Start coming to school at six o'clock, tomorrow in room 211, and I'll catch you up enough so that you don't have to drop out.

TREENA
No! I don't need that shit.

RICK
Six A.M. I'll be there.

Rick hands the loaded gun back to the boy.

SMALL BOY
Thanks.

Rick pats the boy on the head as if he were his own, then walks to the open door. Treena calls after him.

TREENA
Go ahead and be there. I hope you like teachin' by yourself.

Rick disappears without turning around. The baby continues to cry.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 211 - DAY (MORNING)

ANGLE - A WRIST WATCH

where the hands read fifteen minutes after six o'clock. From the teacher's desk, RICK looks up from his watch to the door, now certain Treena is fulfilling her promise not to show.

He pulls the rubber band off a folded newspaper and opens it up to pass the remaining hours.

A STACK OF BOOKS plops on one of the student desks. Much to Rick's surprise, it's TREENA. He checks his watch again.

RICK
You're late.

Treena doesn't say anything. She just stands and stares as if a hundred things were going through her mind. Rick gets up and comes over to where she's standing.

RICK (CON'T)
What do you want to start with?

TREENA
The bathroom.

RICK
Yeah. All right.

She walks to the door, then turns around.

TREENA
My little Charles was asking about you.

Rick smiles, but doesn't quite know what to say.

RICK
Oh.

Treena looks at him again, then walks away. Rick opens one of her books to prepare the tutorial.

Then something catches his attention: The sound of CLANGING METAL coming from the parking lot outside. He walks to the window.

Down in the empty parking lot, seven black GANG MEMBERS are dismantling his MOTORCYCLE with wrenches and crowbars. He can't believe what he sees.

RICK
HEY!!! STOP!!!

They don't. Rick takes a half step around when EVERYTHING GOES WHITE and a BLACK FIST swings into his gut.

EMILE FORTSON holds the WHITE TOWEL tightly over Rick's face while VICTOR, JOJO, and KEVIN take turns slugging away at their principal, totally caught off guard.

Victor delivers his blows mostly to the gut, sometimes with his stockinged foot, while Jojo and Kevin take turns making the white face towel turn red.

Desks scatter as the one sided fighting crashes across the floor.

Totally helpless, Rick takes a few blind swings, connecting once on Jojo's face.

JOJO
Ouuuuww!! Moth--!!

VICTOR
Ssshhh!!!

Victor threatens him for raising his identifying voice while he delivers several more blows to Rick's abdomen.

Emile drops the principal to the floor, unconscious, with the bloody towel still over his face. The other three run quietly out the room, grabbing their shoes at the door.

VICTOR (CON'T)
(whispering)
The last we'll see of that homeboy.

The three take off down the hallway. Emile stares at the motionless body for a confused moment, then closes the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY (LATER)

School has started as the hallway is jammed with students opening their lockers, loitering before their first class, and a few smoking with a watchful eye out for security.

HILARY OROZCO walks through all of this to her students waiting outside room 211 to be let in.

She sticks her key in the slot, but discovers it unlocked. Not able to look through the door's small window which she's covered -- as many teacher do -- with white tissue paper for privacy, she pushes the door open a bit to see inside.

HILARY
Oh. God.
(to the students)
Stay here.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

With the curious students pushed up and peeking around the door, HILARY walks through the desks to the motionless body lying on the floor, a blood-stained towel covering its identity.

Hilary pulls aside the towel to reveal Rick's badly bruised and bloody face.

HILARY
Oh... Mr. Latimer.

He coughs. Blood comes out onto the towel.

HILARY (CON'T)
(to the students)
An ambulance! Someone call an ambulance.

She starts to get up. Rick grabs her tightly by the wrist. He does his best to shake his head.

RICK
No. Please.

HILARY
What do you mean?
(to a student at the door)
Javier!

RICK
No! I can't let them do this.

Still holding Hilary's wrist, Rick slowly gets up with the aid of a desk. He barely balances on his feet again.

HILARY
My God! Is it that important to you?

Letting Hilary go, he takes two careful but painful steps to the door -- then plummets into the desks again.

There is a gasp among the witnessing students, now crowded even tighter around the door.

Rick wastes no time getting up again at the door where the students part at the intensity of his stare.

CUT TO:

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

At the doorway, RICK establishes his balance again, straightens his tie, holds his bloody chin up as best he can, then starts an intent but precarious march down a hallway packed with the gaping stares of students, staff, and teachers.

His face badly beaten and his body bruised all over, no one witnessing the event is unmoved in some way by their the principal never breaking the composure his position demands.

When he reaches the stairwell, he carefully grabs hold the rail. He takes each difficult step down with the best form he can muster.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MAIN BUILDING

RICK continues his wobbly march alone across the parking lot to where his MOTORCYCLE lay in pieces. As best he can, he picks up the GAS TANK, and carries it to the Industrial Arts Building.

CUT TO:

INT. INDUSTRIAL ARTS AUTO SHOP

The Latino mechanics continue their work on the same Corvair Spider when they see the apparition of the beat-up RICK in the doorway holding the gas tank from his motorcycle.

He marches over with a firmer step and places the gas tank on the repaired hood of the Corvair.

RICK
Who?

Absolute silence. Rick looks around at the sympathetic but frightened stares at his beat up face.

RICK (CON'T)
Tell me. Who?

Arturo rises above the other's intimidation by slowly shaking his head.

ARTURO
We can't tell you. You know we can't.

After a moment's delirious thought, Rick realizes the boy is right. They can't tell him.

RICK
Then fix it. Like it was.

Arturo nods his head in agreement. Disgusted with everything, Rick turns his back on them all and heads to the door.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE - DAY

RICK leans back in his chair holding an ice pack to his face while Assistant Principal DARCY paces in front of his desk, too wrought up to sit down.

RICK
So much for your "unwritten agreement", Darcy.

DARCY
Rick, don't let this go to waste. If you bring the police in now, yes, they will question Victor. It's their job. But he'll be back in school the next day and there'll be all hell to pay. For all of us.

On Darcy's last word, JOE PHILLIPS and another GUARD bring TREENA LESTER in kicking and screaming. Darcy shoots a glance at Rick for this seemingly instant defiance of his advice.

PHILLIPS
Just what you ordered.

Phillips and the guard plop her in the chair in front of the desk. She immediately throws a tightly wound WAD OF FIVE-DOLLAR BILLS into Rick's chest.

TREENA
(almost in tears)
There! Take it! That's all of it.

Rick looks over the money -- about fifty dollars.

RICK
I don't have any use for this.

TREENA
I don't have no use for it neither. So just take it. It's yours for what they did to you.

RICK
For what who did?

TREENA
I ain't sayin' nothin' 'cept it's yours and you oughta leave him alone.

RICK
Where is he, Treena?

DARCY
Let it lie, Rick. Don't provoke him.

RICK
I mighta heard where he is from someone else. One of his enemies. White Zac, maybe.

TREENA
It's his job, man. Don't be messin' with a man's job.

RICK
It's my job.

TREENA
Just take the money.

RICK
I don't need it.

Rick pushes the money back across the desk. She pushes it back again.

TREENA
I don't need it neither.

Rick looks into Treena's desperate eyes as if to call her bluff and tell her she's lying. He reaches into his desk for a pack of matches with which he proceeds to light the BUNDLE OF MONEY on fire.

Treena grabs the money before it burns.

TREENA
Paco Diaz. They all at Paco Diaz.

Rick puts away the matches.

RICK
Right. That's what I heard.

Treena pockets the money and runs out of the room. The three men ignore her.

DARCY
Rick. Not even the police mess with Paco. Don't bring this on the school.

Rick looks to Phillips for his opinion.

PHILLIPS
Another fight with Victor could blow this through the roof.

RICK
Then what do you think I should do?

Phillips takes a long look at Darcy, then turns back to Rick.

PHILLIPS
I think you should bring a baseball bat.

Rick nods as if that were a good idea. Darcy shakes his head as if he could see the end of the world coming.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PARKING LOT - DAY

It is later in the afternoon when the battered RICK walks between the cars with a BASEBALL BAT in his hand.

Anticipating his arrival, the LATINO MECHANICS wheel out his freshly rebuilt motorcycle from the auto shop.

With great pride, they stand around it, their expectant eyes waiting for his approval. He notices a new addition: "EL PRINCIPAL" is air-brushed across in fiery letters above a large LIGHTNING BOLT electrifying a tiny Chaparral-like Brick Building.

He's incensed. He can't believe what he sees.

RICK
I said "like it was".

Arturo polishes their work on the gas tank to make it shine with greater luster.

Rick finally realizes the sincerity of the gesture. He raises his fist as a show of support sending a wide, relieved smile spreads across the collective face of the artist/mechanics.

Rick climbs aboard his new machine and speeds off with the baseball bat tucked under his arm.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE INNER CITY

The black and brown faces of the afternoon crowd watch the white "El Principal" ride by with a baseball bat.

ANGLE - THE MOTORCYCLE

as we follow RICK through the streets and past the storefronts which gradually change from English to Spanish. A red '68 CHEVY IMPALA is parked next to a White VOLVO in front of a rundown bar called "PACO DIAZ".

Rick gets off his motorcycle and walks to the uninviting heavy and splintered wood door just as WHITE ZAC comes out, stopping to eyeball Rick's beat-up face and the Baseball Bat in his hand.

He gives him an oddly maniacal grin before going on his way. Rick pauses, then enters as if a regular customer.

CUT TO:

INT. PACO DIAZ

From the bright sunlight, RICK's eyes have to adjust before he sees thirty unfriendly other pairs staring at him from pool tables, card games, and the bar where teenage hoods drink side by side with their adult mentors.

KEVIN, JOJO, and EMILE, celebrating with beers around a center table can't believe who they see approaching them with bruised face and a baseball bat. The BARTENDER finally acknowledges his presence.

BARTENDER
Baseball's outta season, asshole.

Rick doesn't respond until--

RICK
Paco Diaz. Where is he?

BARTENDER
Follow my voice. Asshole.

As Rick walks around the one table, he carefully studies direction of the three gang members' nervous gaze for any clue to the whereabouts of Victor Duncan.

RICK
Mr. Diaz. Were you aware that some of your customers are truant high school students?

PACO DIAZ
Whatta ya want me to do about it?

Rick notices Jojo glancing every so often at a CLOSED BACK DOOR near the bar.

RICK
Nothing.

Rick strolls in the direction of the Back Door and PACO DIAZ.

RICK (CON'T)
I just thought you should know before baseball season starts.

PACO DIAZ
Wha--?

JOJO
Victor!!

Rick swings with everything he has. The closed Back Door smashes open in an instant.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BACK ROOM

RICK topples a stack of BEER CASES, jamming the door closed so that no one can follow him, then smashes a BALANCE SCALE that VICTOR was about to use to measure an unseen drug from a large BROWN PACKAGE.

VICTOR
HEY!!!

A white BUSINESS MAN picks his money up from the table and looks for some avenue to exit. There isn't any.

Victor clicks a SWITCHBLADE. Rick swings the bat and the switchblade flies.

VICTOR (CON'T)
FUCK!! My hand!!

BUSINESS MAN
Uh. Excuse me.

Victor's friends do their best to get in but are only able to push the obstructions a few inches.

Rick pushes the bent over Victor to the ground with his foot. He picks up the heavy Package from the table.

RICK
You were taking this to school?
Let me. It's on my way.

Rick kicks aside the beer cases and throws open the door.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BAR

Letting RICK take only two steps into the bar, KEVIN ARBURTHA swings a SWITCHBLADE to his heart that instead lands in the Brown Package. A stream of WHITE POWDER starts leaking from it.

Rick throws Jojo aside by the arm and charges out the door with the leaking package.

VICTOR comes running out from the back room ready to kill.

VICTOR
Don't just be standing there, niggers!

PACO DIAZ
Victor!

Paco Diaz throws him a long-barreled .38 REVOLVER.

PACO DIAZ (CON'T)
Keep it if you get him.

CUT TO:

EXT. PACO DIAZ - DAY

With the leaking package tucked under his arm, RICK starts up his motorcycle and rides off leaving a trail of white powder.

VICTOR burst out with drawn revolver as his fellow gang members pile into the Chevy Impala with baby fat EMILE behind the wheel.

VICTOR
Mow the motherfucker down.

CUT TO:

RICK

riding back through the streets to school with the TWENTY POUND PACKAGE between his legs, leaking onto the street.

ANGLE - HIS REARVIEW MIRROR

and the RED IMPALA approaching rapidly, about to mow him down.

Rick shifts gears and takes off even faster around a corner.

He sticks his finger in the hole to make it bigger. WHITE POWDER starts pouring out at a much greater rate.

CUT TO:

INT. THE IMPALA

VICTOR watches from the passenger seat in horror at the sight of thousands of dollars of COCAINE spilling onto the street from the motorcycle in front of him.

VICTOR
Step on it, homeboy. Mow 'im down.

EMILE
Shit, man, I'm floorin' it!!

ANGLE - EMILE'S HEEL

digging into the floor below the accelerator, pretending to "floor" it.

CUT TO:

PEDESTRIANS

watching as the Coke spilling "EL PRINCIPAL" races by. Some of them laugh. Some applaud. Most just stand and stare.

CUT TO:

AN ALLEY

which RICK speeds down leaving a white trail for the Impala to drive over.

CUT TO:

THE SCHOOL GATE

where the GUARD watches in amazement as the caravan races past. The red Impala scratches its side in the fence.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL BUILDING

RICK screeches to a stop in front of the school building. He gets off his bike. The four black teenagers pile out of the Impala after it spins out in front of him.

Rick throws the empty bag at VICTOR.

RICK
Here's your cut.

With JOJO, KEVIN, and EMILE standing behind him, Victor walks straight up to Rick and points the REVOLVER into his forehead with an extended arm.

He doesn't say anything or do anything. He simply stares Rick directly into his eyes.

Rick does his best to quell his nervousness, never having had a gun pointed at him in his life. He glances up at Victor's thumb pulling back the hammer.

The School Bell suddenly RINGS with an alarming volume. Rick glances up to the school building as does Victor: Nearly every window has students or teachers looking down at the event.

Rick sighs with relief.

RICK
They'll like you in prison, Victor. You might even get a big surprise up that wise little ass of yours.

Victor takes the gun away from Rick's head.

RICK (CON'T)
The game is over. They saw you.

Victor looks at Rick with an intent and piercing stare.

VICTOR
No one saw nothing.

He steps back and grins. With the other three, he climbs back into the Impala which starts up and screeches out the gate.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

The wounds on his face having healed some from the passage of several days, RICK looks out his window at the students having lunch below. He finds Victor among them, talking closely with his friends. Victor catches Rick's gaze from below and offers a half-hearted nod, as if they were old friends.

RICK
Are you sure there are none?

Rick is talking to JOE PHILLIPS sitting in front of his desk with a clipboard in his lap.

PHILLIPS
Not one students says they saw what happened.

Rick shakes his head in frustration.

RICK
What about teachers? I know I saw at least four at the windows.

Phillips shakes his head while he flips through the pages on his clipboard.

PHILLIPS
I've interviewed every member of the faculty. Not one of them will say they saw anything.

RICK
Why wouldn't they? He'd be gone.

Phillips shrugs.

PHILLIPS
Maybe it's just out of habit.

Rick looks back out the window at Victor who can read the anger and frustration on his principal's face. He smiles.

Rick marches out the office.

CUT TO:

INT. THE TEACHERS LOUNGE

RICK bursts through the closed door to make a room full of teachers look up from their quiet lunch.

They all wait, some nervously, while he stands there studying their faces. He points out the four while he speaks.

RICK
I saw you. You. You. And you, looking down at me from this building while Victor Duncan had a gun barrel pressed against my forehead.

He's pointed to MRS. KUPFER, MR. NOFSINGER, MRS. RECTOR, and MR. HARTER in that order.

RICK (CON'T)
Now is this kind of thing so common here it fails your memory, or do you have something else to tell me?

Most of the teachers are clearly uncomfortable. Some look at each other for what to say. HILARY, grading journals by the window, looks as if this is the first she's heard of this matter.

Still, after a long silence, none of the teachers answer.

RICK
Don't you see it would put him out? Expelled?

MR. HARTER
And as long as we never left school, we'd never get hurt.

RICK
Dammit, that's the risk.

MR. HARTER
It's not worth the risk.

RICK (CON'T)
Would it be if he'd pulled the trigger?

The CLASS BELL RINGS. Only a few of the teachers start shuffling papers.

MR. HARTER
This isn't something we're proud of.

Hilary finally comments as she stands up to leave.

HILARY
Then don't act proud, Jack.

MR. HARTER
I didn't see you speaking out Ms. Orozco.

HILARY
Because I really didn't see it. I saw it coming, but I didn't see it.

MR. HARTER
That's very convenient.

HILARY
You know damn well I'd come forward.

Mr. Harter looks at Hilary with a skeptical eye as he picks up his briefcase and files out with the rest. Hilary is left alone in the room with her principal.

HILARY (CON'T)
I would, Rick.

RICK
I believe you.

Hilary picks up her things and starts toward the door. She stops to look at him again.

HILARY
Don't stop trying, Rick. Don't ever give up.

RICK
I thought you hated what I was doing.

Hilary thinks about the contradiction, then looks back to where the teachers wouldn't talk.

HILARY
I hate this more.

And with that gesture of qualified support, Hilary leaves for class.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE - DAY (LATER)

Through RICK's windows to the main office, we see the last secretary packing her desk for the end of the day. JOE PHILLIPS comes in quietly.

PHILLIPS
Will there be anything else?

Rick looks up from a long stare. He doesn't answer, but studies Phillips' face.

RICK
Why is it I recognize you from somewhere?

PHILLIPS
I don't know.

From the way Phillips answers, Rick realizes he's lying. Then it hits him.

RICK
You carried in three touchdowns at the '76 Rose Bowl.

Phillips has no trouble remembering that.

PHILLIPS
Yeah. I did that.

He glows from the warmth of a more pleasant past.

PHILLIPS (CON'T)
All-American at Chaparral, when it had a football team.

RICK
"Joey" Phillips. You were the best.

Phillips' glow disappears as he thinks about what happened.

PHILLIPS (CON'T)
Yeah, well. It turned out I wasn't the best. Barely made it through the exhibition season in Green Bay.

Rick gives him a sympathetic but puzzled look.

RICK
But you went to a good college.

PHILLIPS
Oh yeah. A real good college. I had to spell its name to get in.

The two look at each other for a long uncomfortable moment.

RICK
Is everyone out?

PHILLIPS
My men are locking up right now.

RICK
You go on home. I'll wait for 'em.

Phillips thanks him with a nod, then leaves without further comment.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Regular Security Guards WILL and ERIC walk down the empty upstairs hallway, checking that doors are locked and looking in through the tiny three by six inch windows to make sure the lights are out in the classrooms.

WILL
No way. That don't sound nothin' like Jerry Lewis.

ERIC
Oh yeah? Well let's see you try it.

Eric looks into the blackened window of #211 then turns the door knob to make sure its locked.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM 211: HILARY'S CLASSROOM

At the sound of someone checking the locked the door, HILARY looks over from the journals she's correcting. But unlike what the guard saw, the lights are on overhead.

A bad Jerry Lewis imitation can be heard through the door.

Hilary takes an old WRIST WATCH from her purse to read the time: Fifteen minutes after three.

She goes back to the journal she's correcting.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BOYS' RESTROOM

Through the eyes of a MALE STUDENT standing on a toilet inside a closed stall, we see the last of TWO GLOVES being pulled over his hands, then the inside of a RUBBER HALLOWEEN MASK being pulled over his face and ours.

ANGLE - WILL, THE GUARD

sticking his head in the door of the bathroom, checking to make sure its empty, then turning out the lights.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

HILARY continues correcting her journals when she suddenly becomes aware of how quiet her surroundings are. She gets up and goes to the window. Below, guards WILL and ERIC walk together towards the near empty parking lot.

This is very curious. She looks at her watch from her purse: Still fifteen minutes after three. Through the window door the hallway lights appear to be on. As she approaches, however, she discovers a piece of CARBON PAPER has been wedged in behind the tissue paper against the window.

HILARY
What kind of stupid joke...?

She crumples up what made her classroom appear dark and empty.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MAIN ENTRANCE

With his helmet under his arm, RICK uses a key to lock the front doors before starting the long walk to his MOTORCYCLE across the parking lot.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CLASSROOM

HILARY pushes her chair into her desk, picks up her purse and the stack of student journals, and walks to the door.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAY

HILARY steps out into the upstairs hallway, now dark except for the light that seeps through the central stairwell windows. She locks her door and starts walking down toward that light.

A bathroom door squeaks open just past the stairwell to let out an undiscernible HUMAN FIGURE. Still a good distance away, Hilary does her best to see who it is.

HILARY
Joe?

No answer. The figure starts walking toward her. Hilary stops.

HILARY (CON'T)
Is that you, Joe?

The figure steps into the light that reveals the long nose and bulging eyes of a grotesque RUBBER MONSTER MASK which shakes when it mimics Hilary in a loud shrill.

MONSTER
Jooooooe? Is that you, Jooooooe?

Hilary screams. The Monster runs towards her. Hilary runs back to the safety of her classroom but, as if in some feverish nightmare, fumbles to find her classroom key while the monster catches up.

MONSTER (CON'T)
Jooooooe?

Hilary inserts the key and clicks the door open.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

As fast as she bursts in, HILARY tries to get the heavy door closed. But she's too late. The masked intruder barges in throwing Hilary into the desks.

With his prey safely cornered in the classroom, the MONSTER stops to play with the LIGHT SWITCH before anything else.

MONSTER
Oooooooo. Light show. Light show.

Hilary screams as the lights go on and off. The Monster closes the locked door.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PARKING LOT

The very faint sound of Hilary's scream blends in with the wind and distant traffic as RICK starts up his motorcycle.

Before putting his helmet on, however, he notices ARTURO DIEGO sitting by himself outside the closed up Industrial Arts building. He rides the fifty or so feet over to talk to him, past the blue CELICA only we know is Hilary's.

RICK
What are you waiting for?

ARTURO
Nothing. I'm just sittin, man.

RICK
Wouldn't you rather go home?

Arturo looks at Rick as if he'd said something unusual.

ARTURO
What's at home to go to? I like it right here.

Rick tries to think of something else to say. He points to the "EL PRINCIPAL" airbrushed on his gas tank.

RICK
It's inspiring.

Arturo lights up a little.

ARTURO
You want I could do more. Maybe a desert scene or a "Star Wars" on the fenders?

Rick shakes his head with a diplomatic smile.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

HILARY is backed up against a wobbly student desk which she does her best to secretly unscrew while the masked MONSTER bangs the WWI MAP of Europe until it rips and falls.

MONSTER
Noooooo. I'm the teeecher now.

With one sweep, the masked intruder clears off everything on Hilary's desk. He pats it as if it were a bed.

MONSTER (CON'T)
And it's party time.

Hilary screams again, this time closer to the window.

MONSTER (CON'T)
What's the matter? You can pretend I'm Ricky.

The Monster approaches, putting the pointer up to its groin as if it were a huge erection. We see Hilary rolling off the last SCREW on the wobbly desk.

MONSTER (CON'T)
C'mon, cunt. You know you want it.

With that, Hilary swings and hurls the flat desk top so that it flies like a frisbee into the monster's face, knocking it to the floor.

MONSTER (CON'T)
Auuuggggh! Bitch!!!!

Hilary makes a run through the clutter of desks to the door which she opens, but doesn't get through before the monster grabs her from behind and slugs her in the face.

She screams again. He slugs her again, knocking her against her own desk. For the first time, he speaks in his own voice.

MONSTER (CON'T)
Don't need this no more.

The Monster pulls off his RUBBER MASK: It's WHITE ZAC -- with a ten-inch KITCHEN KNIFE in his hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDUSTRIAL ARTS - DAY

ARTURO tries more diligently to interest RICK in further alterations.

ARTURO
I could make it low ride for you. Hang some fuzzy dice from the handlebars.

RICK
Maybe later. Now we gotta get goin'.

ARTURO
Oh. I'll just stay here, if you don't mind.

RICK
Uh uh. I gotta lock the gate. You won't be able to get your car out.

Rick points back to the blue CELICA, alone in the parking lot.

ARTURO
Man, that's not my car. That's Miss Orozco's.

Rick looks around to the Celica, then back to Arturo, dumbfounded.

RICK
How...? Where is she?

ARTURO
She's still here.
(shyly)
I was kinda waiting for her.

At that moment, a CHAIR crashes out the building's second story window allowing Hilary's SCREAM to escape. Arturo goes white.

RICK
Oh God. No.

Rick revs up his motorcycle and thunders off letting his helmet fall to the ground.

CUT TO:

THE SCHOOL GROUNDS

and RICK speeding across the parking lot along broken asphalt, directly toward the school building.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

WHITE ZAC ignores the sound of an approaching motorcycle as he unbuttons his Levis and tells HILARY, half conscious and laid out on the desk, what he's going to do to her.

WHITE ZAC
I'm gonna fuck you, beaner lady. Then I'm gonna kill you. But I might even do it at the same time.

CUT TO:

RICK

speeding towards the building and up a grass embankment which sends him flying through the ground WINDOW of a stairwell.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE STAIRWELL

and the MOTORCYCLE crashing through the window panes, landing smack on the concrete stairs. RICK rolls off and runs up to the second floor.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

WHITE ZAC rips HILARY's outer clothes off with the knife before climbing atop her.

WHITE ZAC
The last time you make fun of me in class. The last time.

As White Zac reaches down to let open the front of his pants, Hilary reaches around his BARE NECK for the loose KITCHEN KNIFE, cutting it severely as she brings knife around.

WHITE ZAC
Bitch!!! -- I'm gonna fuck you dead.

With bleeding neck, White Zac wrestles the Knife out of her hand scratching a cut across her ABDOMEN. Police SIRENS approach outside.

He raises the Kitchen Knife in the air to make a when RICK grabs him from behind and hurls him to the floor.

ARTURO arrives at the door as White Zac stands up to go after Rick with the knife. Rick throws a desk at him, knocking him to the ground again.

While the two fight, Arturo walks over to Hilary lying unconscious on her own desk bleeding from her cut. Arturo shakes uncontrollably, reacting as if it were his own mother.

ARTURO
Oh Mary, no. Please no.

He touches the blood to see if it's real just as Rick wrestles the knife out of White Zac's hand, and two POLICE OFFICERS appear at the door with their REVOLVERS pointed at both camps.

OFFICER
Police!! Hands in air!!
(to Rick)
Drop the knife, punk!!

Everything stops. Rick hesitates for a moment, then lets the large knife fall to the floor with a loud CLANG.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE - DAY

RICK stands behind his desk and looks out between the sun-faded venetian blinds with JOE PHILLIPS and ROBERT DARCY sitting in his office.

RICK
The doctor said the cut wasn't too deep. She won't be out of school long.
(to Phillips)
Who called the police?

PHILLIPS
A voice of a black teenager, they said. Very nervous. Hung up without giving his name.

Rick turns around and looks at Phillips as if this were very peculiar.

RICK
Victor?

DARCY
(nodding)
We think he set him up for this.

PHILLIPS
He offers Zac Mawby the teacher of his choice for an afternoon, then calls the police. No more Zac Mawby.

DARCY
And all of Zac's white friends who were selling drugs? None of them showed up for school today.

PHILLIPS
They have no protection.

RICK
How could Zac be so stupid?

PHILLIPS
He just is.

RICK
And Victor finally has his monopoly. Free reign on the school.

PHILLIPS
Except you.

Phillips and Darcy look at Rick to see if he's at all frightened.

RICK
I'll take care of myself.

PHILLIPS
I'm sure you will.

DARCY
By the way, you'll be happy to know the district approved his expulsion today. Zac Mawby, that is.

Rick and Phillips look at each other, incredulous there could be any doubt.

RICK
What about Victor? What if Zac points the finger at him?

DARCY
The police haven't questioned him yet. He just had twenty-three stitches put in the back of his neck. She cut <u>him</u> pretty deep.

RICK
Bring me a hanky.

PHILLIPS
Even if he talks, Rick, they won't believe his worst enemy. We're stuck with Victor until we catch him in the act. With witnesses.

RICK
Yeah, I know. The same old shit.

MS. JENKINS sticks her head in the door with an announcement.

MS. JENKINS
There's a fight in Ms. Orozco's history class. The substitute can't handle it.

RICK
I will.

Rick takes it as an excuse to leave the office.

CUT TO:

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

RICK marches down past the stares of a few TEACHERS sticking their heads out their doors at the sound of a fight inside Hilary Orozco's classroom.

The SUBSTITUTE comes out steaming past Rick.

SUBSTITUTE
They don't pay me enough. They don't pay <u>anyone</u> enough.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S CLASSROOM

Nearly the entire class surrounds ARTURO attacking EMILE, almost to the death with fists and shoves into the desks. Emile defends himself with the same, but is clearly not the aggressor.

RICK marches into the center of the melee and pulls the two apart, holding each at bay with his two arms.

RICK
This better be good.

EMILE
I don't know what it be! He just get up and start hitting me.

ARTURO
He should be in jail. He helped White Zac get Miss Orozco.

EMILE
But I didn't. I really didn't.

Arturo reaches around Rick to take another swing. Rick responds by depositing them in two different desks.

Arturo straightens out his B. Kliban "Cat" tee-shirt, signifying an end to the conflict.

RICK
All right, everybody. Sitdown.

A STUDENT
But we don't have no teacher. He left.

Rick walks up to the front of the class. As the students start to take their seats again, the unpleasant figures of VICTOR, JOJO, AND KEVIN are revealed sitting across the back row, taking in everything without comment.

RICK
You do now.

A chorus of protest breaks out.

LATINO GUY
But you're a principal, man.

BLACK GIRL
There some law 'gainst this. I know.

RICK
Today I'm a teacher and there is no law, so sit down and shut up.

The rest of the class begrudgingly complies. They wait in their seats for Rick's next move as a teacher. He reads from a note jotted down by the substitute.

RICK (CON'T)
All right. So. Your journal assignment was "Why did they call World War One 'The war to end all wars?'"

From the page he glances a few inches away to where the BLOOD STAIN from Hilary's attack clearly remains within the cracks on the formica desktop.

He stops speaking to quell a surge of anger as he looks directly at accomplice Victor sitting smugly in the back row.

RICK
I'm sure you know that World War One did not turn out to be "the war to end all wars." Otherwise it wouldn't have a number.

The class laughs as a courtesy. Emile breaks up as if it were the funniest joke in the world.

EMILE
"Wouldn't have a number." Your first joke be a funny one, Ricky.

Rick notices Victor glaring down at Emile. He continues the class.

RICK
So why would anyone think you could have a war to end all wars? How could that be possible?

BLACK STUDENT
'Cause if you kill you enemy enough, he won't be around to fight you.

RICK
That's one reason.

Emile makes a farting sound with his lips.

EMILE
That a stupid reason, Ricky.

RICK
Emile, you want to stay after school and do push ups?

The class laughs. Emile turns around to see Victor with a stare just short of a verbal threat.

EMILE
No. I don't want that shit.

RICK
I don't either.
(to the class)
So what other reason could they have thought that this war would end all wars?

BLACK GIRL
'Cause it would settle all the differences they would ever have.

RICK
Right!

EMILE
O boo ba doo. We be miss smarty pants.

RICK
Emile!

Emile answers with another bronx cheer, this time into the palm of his hand.

RICK (CON'T)
That's it. Two hundred push ups.
After school.

Rick pauses for a moment to watch the way Victor stares down at Emile -- as if he wanted to grab him by the neck -- and the way Emile appears strangely relieved at having to stay after school.

CUT TO:

EMILE

doing push-ups between a desk and a filing cabinet, each one more difficult than the previous.

EMILE
Twenty-eight... Twenty-nine...
Thirty!

He collapses, his red sweatshirt hitting the dusty floor.

INT. RICK'S OFFICE - DAY

Flipping through a stack of JOURNALS from Hilary's class, RICK looks over the top of his desk to Emile.

RICK
You've got one hundred and seventy more.

EMILE
I know. I do 'em. I jus' be tired now.

RICK
Just be tired with your mouth shut.

EMILE
Okay. Whatever you say, Ricky.

Rick goes back to reading a journal which, instead of writing, has all sorts of weird drawings and curly cues as if comprising some kind of short hand. He shakes his head, confused.

EMILE (CON'T)
(panting from more push-ups)
Ricky. Somebody be here for you.

Rick locks up to ARTURO DIEGO who appears to have been standing in the doorway for awhile.

ARTURO
Did you want to see me, Sir?

RICK
Yes. Come in.

A little nervous at being in the Principal's office with Emile doing push-up, Arturo takes a few steps forward to Rick's desk.

ARTURO
Did I do something bad?

RICK
I don't know. Can you explain this?

Rick holds up the journal with curly cue pages. Arturo's apparent anxiety doubles.

ARTURO
Yeah.

RICK
Go ahead.

ARTURO
Well. Miss Orozco said I could do that just so's I could turn something in.

Rick thinks about it, closing the journal and putting it on the pile with the others.

RICK
I'll be taking Ms. Orozco's place for now. I don't like it.

Arturo becomes even more nervous.

ARTURO
But...

RICK
You do the assignment like everyone else.

ARTURO
But she said I could do that 'til I learned better.

Rick is just about to ask "what" when Arturo takes out a beat-up first grade level "Sam and Ann" reading WORKBOOK hidden inside his book bag.

ARTURO (CON'T)
(quietyly)
She was teaching me in this during lunchtime every day.

Rick takes the book and looks through it. Penciled in are word constructions made by a new reader next to corrections made by a high school teacher.

ARTURO (CON'T)
I'm almost done with this book. She says she has another one for me.

Rick flips to the back of the book, then at Arturo whose pride barely shines through his embarrassment.

RICK
You're almost finished?

ARTURO
Yeah.

RICK
Sit down.

Arturo sits down, a little apprehensive about studying with a new teacher in Emile's presence. Rick lays out the book to the starting place.

RICK
Go ahead.

Arturo musters up his courage as he prepares to read the words.

ARTURO
(reading)
Sam -- and -- Tab -- run -- with --
Waaaalter.

RICK
No. This "a" sounds like a short "o". Like in "dog".

ARTURO
Wolter?

RICK
Right.

Down on the floor, Emile appears curious.

RICK (CON'T)
Try this sentence.

ARTURO
Tab -- ran --

EMILE
(interrupting)
That sound like a baby book! Whatta you be reading a baby book for?

RICK
Get the nose to the floor, Fortson. I don't hear any puffing.

That's because Emile has stood up from the floor and is now looking over the front of the desk.

EMILE
Look at that. Homeboy be learnin' to read and shit.

ARTURO
Yeah, man. You got a problem with it?

EMILE
No. I just never heard nobody ever learn nothin' at Chaparral.

Rick takes the workbook and puts it in front of Emile.

RICK
Okay, smart ass. You read. Anything.

Taken off guard, Emile hesitates before attempting a sentence.

EMILE
(reading perfectly)
Sam and Ann will want the dog and cat. Tab ran up a tree after the bird.

Emile hands the book back to Rick.

EMILE (CON'T)
Mum taught us. At bedtimes.

Rick takes a last look at Emile, then goes back to the lesson.

RICK
Get out of here. Go on home.

Emile drops to the floor to avoid deportation.

EMILE
No I got more push-ups. Lots more push-ups.

Emile starts pumping away. Arturo stops Rick from getting up to throw Emile out.

ARTURO
That's okay. I just have to do these three pages.

RICK
You're right. Three more pages and this book is history.

Emile is heard laughing in the middle of his push-ups.

EMILE
That a good one, Ricky. It be a history book in your class.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

It is later in the afternoon when EMILE walks from the building alone, clutching himself over his red sweatshirt, little help against the cool wind blowing across the campus.

When he reaches the padlocked gate, he looks both ways before climbing the high chain link fence. He looks both ways again before walking down the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. AN ALLEY

Halfway down the alley with his hands pushed deep down into his blue jeans pockets, EMILE whips around suddenly at the sound of an ENGINE.

RICK slows his MOTORCYCLE beside him.

RICK
What's going on?

It doesn't take long to see Emile is extremely on edge. He becomes defensive very quickly.

EMILE
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to laugh at him. I think it's good he be learnin' to read and shit. I jus' never seen it before.

RICK
You know what I'm talking about.

EMILE
I didn't do nothin'?

RICK
What are you afraid of?

EMILE
I ain't afraid of nothin' either.

RICK
Don't shit with me, Fortson.

Emile stops and looks at Rick, wondering if he can trust him.

EMILE
I didn't have nothin' to do with what they did with Miss Orozco. That wasn't me. I swear.

RICK
Then who was it?

EMILE
They be doin' a favor for White Zac so he become a new homeboy and help us get rid of the other whites. I hate White Zac so I called the police.

RICK
You called the police?

EMILE
Yeah, but Victor don't know that. First he was pissed 'cause White Zac is in jail. But now it don't matter 'cause all the whites left school.

Rick thinks to himself as all this new information begins to make better sense.

EMILE (CON'T)
I don't like this, Ricky. They say that you're all that's left in their way and they have to get rid of you.

Rick realizes he is watching a student more scared than he's ever seen one.

EMILE (CON'T)
I wish I could just get away, you know? Real far away where no one knows me and there ain't none of this shit. I don't like what happened to Miss Orozco. I like her. Now I just want to get away.

Emile is finished. He stands now, almost shivering from the wind rushing through the alley.

RICK
Are you going to be okay tonight? You want a ride home?

EMILE
No. Thanks, Ricky. I don't live far. But you be careful.

Rick gives him reassuring pat on the back.

RICK
I'll be okay.

Rick starts to ride off, then looks back.

RICK (CON'T)
Three journal pages tomorrow, or its two hundred more push-ups.

Emile pulls his journal from his pocket and waves it. Rick rides off.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AN APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Wearing a thick wool coat and carrying a Manilla Envelope fully stamped and addressed to "Rick Latimer", HILARY OROZCO walks from the dark sidewalk to the stairs of the middle-class apartment building.

She knocks on a door. After a short moment, RICK, disheveled in the suit and tie as he never bothered to change from work, opens the door and looks at her as if she were absolutely the last person he expected to see on his doorstep.

HILARY
Well? Are you going to let me in?

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S APARTMENT

While RICK pulls two "Sam and Ann" READING BOOKS from the envelope, HILARY surveys the cluttered and unkempt bachelor apartment.

HILARY
I was going to mail them. But when I walked to the box, I just kept walking.

RICK
Thank you. I need these.

HILARY
Rick, you spoiled an illusion. I always thought high school principals had a maid and two cars.

RICK
Huh. I once had two cars.

Hilary walks over to the unmade bed where several HISTORY BOOKS lay open next to an empty box of Triscuits. She picks one up.

HILARY
What are you reading about?

RICK
World War One. The Great Depression. I have to stay a step ahead of them. But if--

HILARY
But if I can walk five miles to your place, when will I be coming back?

RICK
I don't want to rush, but we do need you. They miss you.

Hilary has walked over to a CHEST OF DRAWERS, half of them open, on which rests the class picture of a YOUNG CHILD. Hilary looks to see if the boy resembles Rick. He does.

RICK (CON'T)
My son. Thomas. He lives in Chicago with my ex-wife.

HILARY
Oh. How old?

Rick replies with a bittersweet pride.

RICK
Tomorrow's his eighth birthday.

Hilary doesn't pursue that line of questioning but Rick feels he should say something.

RICK (CON'T)
I used to work late all the time. Sometimes overnight.

HILARY
And she thought you were having an affair?

Rick nods his head, now realizing his great personal loss is rather comic. They both appear to be holding back a laugh.

HILARY (CON'T)
Rick. I want you to come over for dinner. Let me cook you something that's not in a microwave. Eat sitting down.

She's pointing to his messy corner of a Kitchen. Rick nods as if he coudn't think of anything he'd rather do.

Hilary continues her slow walk around the apartment, looking at things.

HILARY (CON'T)
You know. Everytime I close my eyes, I see that monster mask.

RICK
I'm sorry. I sort of feel responsible.

HILARY
Why? You saved my life.

RICK
If I'd gotten there sooner, you wouldn't have been hurt.

HILARY
Oh. You're right. You should've worn your cape.

A look at Rick's sincerity makes her reconsider.

HILARY (CON'T)
I didn't mean that. Really. It's just that even if he hadn't cut me, I'd still be hurt.

She continues looking at things. Rick follows her.

RICK
But it seems to be healing well?

HILARY
Yes. Isn't that the joke? How your body just goes on healing, whatever it is that caused the damage. It doesn't matter if it's from some surgery, or

an accident, or a student trying to kill you to rape your body. It doesn't know and it doesn't care. It just goes about its business.

Hilary bites her lip to hold back a surge of emotion. Rick isn't sure what to do to comfort her. He puts his hand on her shoulder.

RICK
Do you want me to drive you home.

She nods her head very quickly. Rick grabs his Leather Jacket off a chair, then opens the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CITY STREETS - DAY (EARLY MORNING)

There is foggy drizzle in the air as the helmeted RICK LATIMER retraces his route to Chaparral through the downtown and inner city.

The black woman with the cane still waits at the bus stop, this time with an umbrella. A different group of Mexicans wait for a day's work at the street corner.

All watch Rick ride by, the highlight of the morning.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL

RICK hangs up the lock on the entrance gate and leaves it open before riding in towards the parking lot and main building.

ANGLE - THROUGH RICK'S HELMET SHIELD

as we try to make out what he's looking at: A rain-soaked, red and blue cloth hanging from the FLAGPOLE.

Someone has left the flag out all night, Rick appears to be thinking by the annoyed manner he parks his motorcycle.

He takes off his helmet and carries it to the building, his eyes never leaving the wet desecration.

But as we approach and come around the flagpole, the red hanging from it becomes a RED SWEATSHIRT.

The blue becomes a pair of faded BLUE JEANS.

And Rick's minor annoyance spirals into horror when his eyes meet EMILE's staring blankly down a hundred feet, the flagpole cord wrapped securely around his neck.

Rick turns away. There's no one around to ask if it's still there -- if he's really seeing this.

He looks up again. Emile still stares down at him until the wind shifts his body away. And Rick explodes.

RICK
No!!!!!!!

He hurls his helmet as far as he can into the air. Before it hits the ground, we--

CUT TO:

A PARKED AMBULANCE and a CROWD OF STUDENTS

watching TWO POLICE OFFICERS lowering Emile's Body down from the Pole the same they would a flag.

The scene is quiet. And though most of the spectators are used to living with violence, the sight of the dead but familiar face is enough to cut through a lifetime of built-up defenses.

A Police Officer reaches up and closes Emile's eyes as he's brought to the stretcher and laid down for the last time.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BOYS' LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The noise and usual chatter, as male students suit up in their white t-shirts and red gym shorts pulled over sweat pants.

RICK walks past each row of lockers until he finds the one he's looking for:

The one with VICTOR DUNCAN standing before an open locker, shirtless in sweatpants. Rick stops. He looks into Victor's deep stare for some other clue that he's the one.

A grin slowly breaks across Victor's face.

VICTOR
Morning, Ricky. 'Member your flag salute?

That was all he needed. In one sweeping motion he grabs Victor by the hair, pulls him down the aisle, and pushes another student out from under a shower as he locks Victor's face in its stream.

VICTOR (CON'T)
Auuugh! I can't breath.

RICK
Neither can Emile.

VICTOR
Shit! It's hot!

Victor spits out the water beating down on his face. Rick turns up the hot water a notch.

RICK
And getting hotter.

VICTOR
What do you want, mother?!

RICK
I want you out.

VICTOR
Fuck you.

Rick turns down the cold a notch. Victor screams like a child. More steam rises as the entire P.E. class surrounds the scene.

VICTOR (CON'T)
Aaauugghhh!!! It's burnin'!!

RICK
It's burning me too, Victor. But I'm not letting go 'til I hear it.

Victor tries his best to slug Rick in the gut. Rick responds by turning off the cold water completely.

VICTOR
My skin!! My skin!!

RICK
Get out, Victor.

VICTOR
Auuuhgg right!! I'm gone.

And with that Rick throws the poached and barely conscious black teenager across the shower room. He screams back from the puddle.

VICTOR
You're dead, Fucker! I'm gonna kill you!

Rick turns to the crowd of students, half dressed and watching in absolute amazement. He looks one of them straight in the eye.

RICK
Did you hear that?

The student very reluctantly nods his head. Rick points to another.

RICK (CON'T)
Did you?

That one nods his head as well.

VICTOR
I know where you live, man. I'm gonna kill you when you're not looking.

Rick walks over to Victor and lifts him up against the wet tile. Close, quiet, but very firm, he speaks directly to his steaming wet face.

RICK
I don't take my work home. I do it here.

VICTOR
I kill you where I want to, Fucker.

RICK

Tomorrow. I'm coming to school in the morning. I'm not leaving until all my work is finished. All of it. Do you understand me?

Rick thrusts Victor against the wall for greater emphasis.

RICK (CON'T)
Do you, punk?

VICTOR
I get you. Tomorrow is your last day.

Rick lets Victor go so that he slides down to the puddle of shower water. Re-adjusting his coat and tie, he walks out past a stunned class and P.E. Teacher.

CUT TO:

INT. AN APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

At a nicely set table, TWO PLATES OF FOOD remain uneaten but played with. This is Hilary's apartment. Austere but, unlike Rick's, very well taken care of.

The sliding glass door is open to a small BALCONY.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BALCONY

RICK and HILARY stand next to each other, silent, looking out from the secend story at the quiet but stark hispanic neighborhood. Most of the small houses have bars on the windows.

Hilary takes a breath to say something.

HILARY
What will you do if they fire you?

RICK
They won't. Unless Victor's father is a lawyer.

They go back to silence again until Hilary continues.

HILARY
There's a boarding school back east. Boys and girls, in a beautiful part of Connecticut. They called me back today.

She thinks about the place while she looks out on the neighborhood.

RICK
That's far away.

HILARY
It's seems even farther.

RICK
Are you going to go?

Hilary almost imperceptibly nods her head. Rick's disappointment is greater than he indicates.

RICK
We'll miss you. I will.

Hilary doesn't respond to that, but to something that seems to be bothering her.

HILARY
I'm not going because I'm afraid, Rick. I'm not a coward.

RICK
You never were before. Why should you start now?

HILARY
It's just that for once I want to open my eyes and not see ugliness. I don't want to hear about it. I don't want to know about it. You can only be so dedicated. There's only so much you can do for other people before you have to do something for yourself.

Hilary looks to see Rick's reaction. He seems deep in thought, staring off the balcony.

HILARY (CON'T)
Do you hate me for that?

RICK
No. I envy you.

A bit puzzled, she looks to him face to face.

RICK
Sometimes I wish I could do something just for myself. Not much. Just something.

Without another word there is that brief tension reserved for cars and doorsteps as the two look into each other's eyes.

Rick very gently puts both hands on Hilary's shoulders. He gives her a very soft, if not polite, kiss, then steps back to look at her.

RICK
I better go. I have a morning reprimand.

CUT TO:

INT. HILARY'S APARTMENT

RICK walks in from the balcony and picks his leather jacket off the COUCH, not noticing HILARY closing and locking the sliding glass door behind them.

The lights go out with a CLICK. Rick turns around. Hilary walks from the lamp, wraps her arms around Rick's neck, and kisses him as passionately as any teacher has her principal.

They separate to look into each other's eyes, Hilary sensing some hesitancy in Rick.

HILARY
It's okay. I'll be all right.

They kiss again, even more passionately, until they move to the couch, and disappear into darkness.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE BOARD CHAMBERS - DAY

In a scene reminiscent of his last day at Sycamore High School, RICK LATIMER sits in the lone chair at the focus of the horseshoe, dressed for what might be his last day at Chaparral.

Attorney DAVID PAXON questions him as if he were on the witness stand.

PAXON
Did you think you'd earn another "Distinguished Service" award? You'd get your name in the paper? It would spice up your resume? My God, Man. What did you think you were doing?

Rick thinks a moment, then replies.

RICK
Career counseling.

PAXON
Oh this is very funny. Holding a student under a hot shower.

RICK
He's not a student. He's a killer.

PAXON
That hasn't been proven.

Rick thinks about that one for a long time.

RICK
I know.

Board President DICK ELLIOT interrupts the line of questioning.

ELLIOT
David. Rick is not on trial here.

PAXON
These are all questions that have to be answered. For the record.

ELLIOT
The record can wait. Sit down.
(to Rick)
We brought you here this morning because we're concerned about your

safety. The students around the scene said this Victor threatened your life.

RICK
It's natural, considering what happened.

ELLIOT
And the youth authority has reported Zac Mawby "missing".

If it weren't so tragic, Rick would have no other choice but to start rolling with laughter.

ELLIOT
Either way, it's no longer your concern. We're taking you out of Chaparral today.

RICK
But why? We're winning. We've just about turned this around.

ELLIOT
You just don't get it, do you? That's not why we sent you there.

Rick stops to consider the implication of what has just been said. Elliot continues.

ELLIOT
After this meeting, you will report as Assistant Principal at Condit High. With the same pay.

RICK
And if I refuse?

ELLIOT
You're out a job. Either way, the guards at Chaparral will be instructed to keep you out. You're no more welcome there now than this Victor character.

Rick resigns himself to the order.

RICK
May I just be allowed to complete the school day, today?

ELLIOT
Why?

Rick misleads without lying.

RICK
I have some unfinished business.

Elliot catches himself considering Rick's request.

ELLIOT
You have no business Mr. Darcy can't take care of.

Although an employee for several years, Rick appears incredulous they won't even grant him that.

RICK
I could make this very difficult for everyone. I could hire some smart-ass lawyer like Woodbury and sue the district, just for the hell of it.

Elliot looks to the board members who shrug their shoulders.

ELLIOT
All right. One more day.

RICK
And keep my transfer a secret until tomorrow?

ELLIOT
Sure.

Rick stands up and starts to walk out, but Elliot has a few more words.

ELLIOT (CON'T)
Rick. If or when this ever blows over and we consider it safe again, you can go back to Chaparral.

Rick walks out with a polite nod.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DISTRICT HALLWAY

RICK makes the long walk down the hallway with the enthusiasm of a prisoner being led to the gas chamber.

The ELEVATOR opens to let out HILARY who stops upon seeing Rick. She stays in the elevator when he gets in.

CUT TO:

INT. THE ELEVATOR

Despite their new familiarity, RICK and HILARY look at each other with a little awkwardness, perhaps knowing they only have a few minutes more together.

HILARY
What did they say?

Rick looks deep into her eyes before lying outright.

RICK
They told me to be careful. I'm going back to Chaparral today.

Hilary seems surprised, but at the same time, strangely disappointed.

HILARY
Oh.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DISTRICT BUILDING - DAY

The big, ugly city shimmers in the bright sun from the steps where RICK and HILARY stop to part company. For a long moment they just look at each other, not knowing what to say.

Hilary prepares a pitch to Rick.

HILARY (CON'T)
I just spoke with the headmaster at that boarding school, Rick. He says there's room for someone like you there. It pays more. And it's beautiful this time of year.

Rick smiles slightly as he pictures taking her up on this.

HILARY (CON'T)
And we could stay together.

As his smile starts to fade, Rick slowly shakes his head.

HILARY (CON'T)
Damn you. Why? You know you could be killed any minute. You could be killed right here.

RICK
Yeah. I do.

HILARY
Then what are you trying to prove? Do you want to die? Is that your secret wish? To have a plaque put up in the gymnasium with your profile in bronze?

Rick shakes his head again.

RICK
There's nothing I want more than to leave with you now. Nothing. But I can't leave here if it's to save my own life. It wouldn't be a life worth saving.

Hilary takes a good long look at him, maybe realizing that for him, he's right.

HILARY
And I can't stay here to see you lose it.

She waits for a response, maybe a change of mind, but gets none.

HILARY (CON'T)
We didn't even get a chance, Rick.

RICK
I know. But not many around here do.

She thinks about it, then leans up to kiss him on the lips.

HILARY
Good bye.

She turns around to walk away. Rick takes a deep breath to say something difficult before the growing distance makes it impossible.

RICK
Hilary.

She stops, but does not turn around.

She looks back with a smile through her welled-up eyes, then continues walking into the wet city streets.

Rick doesn't take a step until she disappears.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The in the middle of the new day, the graffiti covered school stands by itself in the lot as if ready to make a fresh start.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAYS

Students go about their business getting to their class before the bell rings. When it does, the halls are empty save several security guards.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

Looking as if he hadn't showered from the rain the day before, RICK LATIMER, the man responsible for the school's return, sits at his desk finishing some unseen paperwork.

He folds it up and stuffs it into an envelope addressed to "MR. JOSEPH LATIMER".

JOE PHILLIPS comes in without knocking.

PHILLIPS
You wanted to see me?

Rick extends the letter to him.

RICK
Mail this first thing tomorrow morning, unless you hear from me otherwise?

Phillips looks at the letter, then back at Rick with a curious expression.

PHILLIPS
Sure. Whatever you say.

Phillips starts to walk out. Rick continues his requests.

RICK
And when you leave tonight, leave the downstairs doors unlocked.

PHILLIPS
Sure. Are you expecting someone?

RICK
Yes.

Phillips nods in agreement but is only halfway to the door when it hits him. He looks at Rick whose somber expression confirms what he suspects.

RICK
It's inevitable. There's nothing either of us can do.

Phillips continues on out the door but is only gone for a moment before returning with a Charlie Brown and Snoopy LUNCH BOX.

He puts it on the desk in front of Rick.

PHILLIPS
Open it.

Rick unlatches the Lunch Box and lifts the lid. Inside, a .38 CALIBUR REVOLVER lies next to the Thermos.

PHILLIPS (CON'T)
It's left over from a locker search. I didn't turn it in. The bullets are in the thermos.

Rick closes the lid and pushes the lunch box back across the table.

RICK
I'm not a policeman, Joe. I'm a high school principal. I wouldn't know how to use it.

PHILLIPS
Point it and pull the trigger. Any moron can do it.

Phillips pushes it back across the table and keeps his hand on it.

PHILLIPS (CON'T)
I'm not leaving you here unless you take it. And I'm not mailing that letter to your father.

Rick realizes Phillips isn't kidding. He takes the Peanuts Lunch Box and puts under his desk.

PHILLIPS (CON'T)
You think he'll understand? If something happens to you?

RICK
He was a teacher; when that's all a teacher had to be. I'm not sure he'll

understand. But I know he'll have plenty to say about it.

Both knowing Rick's father, they break the tension with a laugh.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAYS

The SCHOOL BELL RINGS with a haunting pitch as students make their way to their lockers for the last time before home.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

In all their various forms of transportation, STUDENTS exit en masse through the open front gate with a jubilant spirit commensurate to the sunny weather.

Some dance to music from the LARGE RADIOS they weren't allowed to play in school.

Others tear out onto the road in their cars, free again for nineteen hours.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAYS

The high spirits are shared by the SECURITY GUARDS who check the classrooms as fast as they can. Today they were given orders to leave early.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE

A clearly preoccupied ARTURO finishes reading a page for RICK.

ARTURO
Sam -- and -- Ann -- will -- waaant, I mean wont, will want...

He stops, deep in thought.

RICK
Go ahead.

Arturo looks up at TREENA LESTER standing in front of Rick's desk. She seems very nervous when Rick looks up as well.

TREENA
I was wondering, Mr. Latimer, if you could start helping me with school

work in the mornings? Like we were going to?

Rick is surprised she's asking, but hesitates before answering. She takes his hesitation as a "no".

TREENA (CON'T)
Please? It won't happen again. I don't have anything to do with them anymore. I just want to catch up in school, that's all.

He slowly nods his head, lying so as not to reveal his secret.

RICK
First thing Monday morning. I'll be there.

Treena smiles with an enthusiasm tempered only by Rick's sullen expression. She notices how Arturo looks at him strangely as he turns his attention back to the reading.

Treena turns around slowly and walks out.

RICK (CON'T)
Go ahead.

But Arturo doesn't.

ARTURO
Man, who do you think doesn't know?

RICK
What're you talking about?

ARTURO
You gotta let me stay. You gotta let me help you fight.

Rick realizes he hasn't kept a secret. He doesn't bother denying it.

RICK
No.

ARTURO
But you don't know what they did. They made us afraid. Afraid to say what we saw or even leave the garage.

RICK
It's over.

ARTURO
But don't you see? I hafta prove myself. I hafta prove I'm a man.

Rick studies the brave but injured young man as if he were considering granting his wish. Arturo waits expectantly.

RICK
All you have to do is grow up.

JOE PHILLIPS appears at the doorway.

PHILLIPS
The girl's out and the building's empty, Rick. I left the downstairs doors unlocked.
(looking to Arturo)
So you can get out later.

RICK
Good. Escort Mr. Diego out the gate and make sure he keeps his mouth shut until you hear from me, or mail my letter.

ARTURO
No way!

Rick pushes the reading book across the desk.

RICK
Have him finish this.

ARTURO
You're stupid, man. Everyone knows.

Phillips grabs Arturo by the good arm and escorts him out with the reading book.

ARTURO (CON'T)
You asshole! I saved your life! You son of bitch.

With Arturo out of Rick's office, Phillips stops at the door to look at Rick, and to hear his last request.

RICK
Take care of him.

Joe Phillips nods, then walks out believing he may have seen his principal for the last time.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FRONT GATE

JOE PHILLIPS locks the front gate from the outside, gets in his car with an angry ARTURO, then drives away.

CUT TO:

INSIDE JOE PHILLIPS' CAR

where, as he and ARTURO drive along the stretch of fence, STUDENTS hang together in small clusters, seemingly waiting for something to happen inside the school.

ARTURO
See, man? I told you. There ain't no one who don't know.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Alone in the school building, RICK looks out from his window at the students clustered along the fence.

CUT TO:

BULLETS

pouring onto the desk from a Charlie Brown THERMOS.

RICK takes the GUN out of the lunch box and examines it. He points it at the RED LOGO on an American Heart Association poster, then pulls the trigger.

CLICK. CLICK. The empty CHAMBER turns with deadly precision.

One by one he puts each bullet into it's place, perhaps wondering where and when they'll ever come out again.

Rick lays the loaded gun on the desk in front of him. He sits and stares at it for a moment before looking back out through the window at the STUDENTS along the fence.

He takes his pair of HIGH-POWERED BINOCULARS from his desk and looks through. The student bodies now have faces. Distinct faces -- some laughing with the others, some nervous, pressed up against the fence.

Rick lowers the binoculars. He picks up the Revolver and empties the BULLETS into his hand, on first motion throwing them all out the window, but on second thought dropping them into a cold CUP OF COFFEE causing it to overflow on his desk.

He gets up and marches out the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE FENCE

and front gate where the last waiting student walks away as the sun sets behind the distant skyscrapers of the city's downtown.

The white Fluorescent STREET LAMPS which surround the school building ignite when they sense the darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. A CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM

It is totally dark now as RICK climbs in through window and closes it without it's latch. He walks back between the experiment counters to the hallway, leaving the door to the room ajar.

CUT TO:

RICK'S WATCH

with it's hands both upright for 12:00 midnight. It's TICKING is the loudest sound in the building.

RICK paces around the dark main office dimly illuminated by the white light outside. He looks around at the various objects he'd never noticed: The Photographs of Children on the secretaries' desk. An "In Memorium" list of dead students framed but not prominent on the side of a wooden CABINET.

Rick opens the cabinet. Inside he spots several Academic and Athletic TROPHIES stashed among the junk and clutter.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE FENCE

in the darkness, swaying with the silent breeze. It starts to shake all of a sudden with the CLANGING SOUNDS of people climbing over it.

FOUR SHADOWS jump to the pavement. Silhouetted against building lights, they walk together towards their grusome appointment.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Doing his best to stay awake, RICK puts his nervous energy into polishing a tarnished old TROPHY so that he can now clearly read "Chaparral High School -- 1913 Conference Champions"

He checks his watch again: 4:40 a.m.

RICK
C'mon, Victor. You bastard.

He opens his eyes wide to keep them from closing, then continues polishing with more fervor. Half the trophies on his desk are already polished to a shine.

Then the LIGHTS go on in the hallway. Not the immediate hallway, but the one downstairs. Rick knows now. They're here.

He puts down the trophy.

CUT TO:

INT. THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

RICK steps out from the main office towards the stairwell where he can see the lights have been turned on at one end of the downstairs hallway. He hears the slow footsteps of several people.

INT. THE DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY

FOUR SILHOUETTES walk from the open double-doors, faceless and backlit by the hallway lights behind them.

As they walk in together between the rows of lockers, VICTOR, WHITE ZAC, KEVIN, and JOJO are able discern the figure of RICK standing alone at the opposite stairwell.

Victor strains to see if Rick is armed, if he has a gun, but it's too dark to see.

Rick starts walking towards them, taking the chance they won't start firing immediately -- the chance they'll wait for the thrill of closer range. And they do, waiting and walking.

He stops in the light.

The four respond by drawing their fire power, quickly and simultaneously.

Rick dives into the CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM, leaving the door open behind him.

VICTOR
We got 'im.

The four holler like children at recess as they run the distance toward the classroom Rick disappeared into.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM

The four explode through the doorway, firing their .45 AUTOMATIC, their .38 REVOLVER, their SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN, and their PUMP ACTION SHOTGUN in all directions at anything and everything.

PYREX BEAKERS explode.

GRADUATED CYLINDERS crash.

The TABLE OF ELEMENTS shreds into nothing.

VICTOR raises his hand to stop firing. In the silence, there is no sight or sound of Rick.

WHITE ZAC finishes reloading his double-barrel Sawed-Off Shotgun then walks slowly between the lab counters, ready to blow away the hiding principal at every dark turn.

Broken Jars of CHEMICALS fizz together creating unknown GASEOUS COMPOUNDS.

White Zac reaches the last counter. No Rick. He shrugs his shoulders to Victor who points JOJO to the window.

Coughing from the fumes, Jojo walks over and looks around out the open window.

JOJO
I don't see nothin', Vic.

But with the CLATTERING OF LOOSE CHANGE five feet below, Jojo is halfway out the window shooting his .45 at rolling COINS.

RICK drops down from the narrow ledge above. He rolls Jojo out the window onto the broken glass and asphalt..

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOL - NIGHT

In the first faint glow of daylight, KEVIN and WHITE ZAC point their .38 and sawed-off shotgun at RICK rolling JOJO's front side around as a shield.

JOJO
Don't shoot me, niggers.

KEVIN
Keep him there. I'll blow his head off.

While Kevin starts to climb out the window for a point blank kill, Rick points Jojo's GUN HAND with his own.

JOJO
Kev! Watchit!!

Rick reaches around Jojo with his other arm and belts him in the stomach -- full force.

Jojo convulses, squeezing his trigger. It FIRES, ricochetting off the brick over Kevin's head.

JOJO (CON'T)
You bastard!!!

Rick belts him again. Jojo fires again causing Kevin to retreat back into the Chemistry Class where he coughs from the FUMES. Rick rolls Jojo over the asphalt to the Basement Window.

The two fall through it. It's been unlatched.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT FOOD STORAGE

RICK and JOJO fall onto some SACKS OF FLOUR spread out over the cement floor with enough force to knock the gun from Jojo's hand and under some storage shelves.

Rick belts the weaponless student in the gut and in the face until KEVIN jumps down from the unlatched window firing off his .38 REVOLVER.

Jojos drops to the floor. Rick has no defense but to run.

Kevin chases after him, firing as often as he can. REFRIED BEANS ooze from a twenty-pound can. FRUIT PUNCH floods the floor. MUSTARD explodes.

Kevin runs up the dark stairs after Rick.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SCHOOL KITCHEN

RICK dodges around counters, hanging pots and pans, and the industrial stove top looking for some defense against KEVIN firing bullets into CLANGING metal.

Rick pulls down a SKILLET. A bullet goes right through it. He wings it at his assailant, buying time for an escape.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CAFETERIA

Reloading his gun, KEVIN walks by the ends of the long formica LUNCH TABLES spanning the length of the room.

One of the tables starts barreling into to him.

Kevin shoots down the length at RICK pushing it from the other end.

Rick ducks under the table as he pushes even harder. Kevin ducks under firing a few more shots.

Rick comes up again as the table edge SMASHES KEVIN AGAINST THE FAR WALL.

Kevin falls beside his GUN, his wind knocked out like it's never coming back.

Rick ducks to the floor as the BLAST of a SHOTGUN announces the arrival of VICTOR and WHITE ZAC on either side of the cafeteria.

Kevin writhes on the floor. He sees Rick in a crawling race toward his loose gun, but he can't catch his breath to warn Victor.

He tries to make a sound. Any sound. But just when Rick is within arm's reach, it comes.

KEVIN
Vic..! My gun!

His call is answered by a barage of SHOTGUN FIRE from both sides.

Rick rolls under the table. Victor and White Zac stalk him like hunters. Rick dives under another table.

VICTOR
I got him!

Victor FIRES. Misses. Fires. CLICK. He pats his jacket but takes out only one SHELL.

VICTOR (CON'T)
Shit, man! Gimme some shells.

WHITE ZAC
No. He's mine.

White Zac fires into the table at Rick. He misses.

VICTOR
You hear me, Motherfucker?

WHITE ZAC
I didn't hear nothing, Nigger.

Victor turns his SHOTGUN at White Zac and explodes his last shell into his chest. White Zac flies back, very bloody and very dead.

VICTOR
(over his body)
I said "gimme some shells."

Victor picks up White Zac's Double Barrel Gun and Box of Shells as Rick darts across the tables and out the front door. Victor grins.

VICTOR (CON'T)
It's just you and me, Ricky.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

In the glow of the early morning, RICK runs around the side of the school building only a few strides ahead of a grinning VICTOR putting two more shells in his double barrel shotgun.

VICTOR
Special delivery for Ricky Lateemer.

Rick ducks into the open double-doors.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY

RICK runs as far down the hallway as he can before VICTOR stops at the entrance with his sawed-off double barrel aimed straight ahead.

VICTOR
Sign on the dotted line.

Victor fires both barrels. Rick falls, having taken some of the buckshot. He gets up and stumbles toward the stairwell.

CUT TO:

THE STAIRS

and RICK doing his best to climb them with VICTOR's official sounding voice not far behind.

VICTOR (O.S.)
Paging Mr. Latimer. Richard Latimer.

Once around the bend of the stairs, Rick looks back at the STAIRWELL WINDOW exploding from another blast.

ANGLE - VICTOR

slowly climbing the stairs, smiling, knowing he has the advantage and another barrel to blow.

VICTOR (CON'T)
Mr. Death calling.

Halfway up the stairs, he hears the MEN'S ROOM DOOR closing. He hurries to the top. The LIGHT is on under the door.

VICTOR (CON'T)
(put on woman's voice)
I'm sorry, Mr. Death. Mr. Latimer in in the toy-let.

He opens the shotgun and starts replacing the spent shell.

A FIRE EXTINGUISHER hits him in the gut sending SHELLS and SHOTGUN flying over the side, clattering on the bottom floor.

RICK
You wanna go down after it?!

Rick starts to lift Victor over the side.

Victor reaches into his jacket and fires a .22 CALIBER BULLET, point blank into Rick's shoulder.

Rick falls back down the stairs. Victor laughs, pointing the small REVOLVER at him again while he wipes blood from lip.

VICTOR
Didn't you know, Ricky? I was a Boy Scout! Ha ha ha ha.

Victor fires into the stairs, kicking the bleeding Rick further on down them.

VICTOR (CON'T)
You're gonna die now. You know that? You're gonna die.

Rick doesn't answer. Victor fires another round, barely missing. He kicks him again.

VICTOR (CON'T)
Tell me what it feels like to know you're gonna die. You're the teacher. I wanna know.

Rick holds firm, not answering. He does whatever he can to protect himself as Victor kicks him around the bend of the stairwell across the broken glass, the gun always pointed and ready to kill.

VICTOR (CON'T)
I need to know. I'm the student. What's it feel like? Look! I'm even raising my hand!

He is as he kicks Rick down the second set of stairs and fires a ricochet off the cement.

VICTOR (CON'T)
Tell me what it feels like to know you're gonna die. Tell me!! ...now

Victor takes careful aim at Rick's head.

He pulls the hammer back, then looks in the eyes of HILARY his former history teacher -- and the shaking double barrels of his former SHOTGUN.

HILARY
You tell me, Victor.

Hilarys rubs her finger up the curving metal of the trigger. Victor locks his eyes on hers, offering his most innocent and sympathetic expression while he slowly raises both his hands.

RICK
Hilary. Don't let him.

Victor drops the .22 REVOLVER over the side of the stairwell. Hilary still points the Shotgun at him from below, but now takes pressure off the trigger.

Victor KICKS Hilary's gun up. It explodes into his SHOULDER--

VICTOR
FUCK!!!

--then tumbles to the floor where it's one LIVE SHELL rolls free. Victor dives for the Shotgun and the free shell.

HILARY
Rick!! Watch out!!

RICK
You bastard.

Rick gets off the stairs to stop him. The wounded black teenager ambles down the hall to buy time loading it.

Rick follows as fast as he can.

RICK (CON'T)
Don't try it bastard. I'm gonna kill you.

ANGLE - VICTOR

shoving the shell in backwards, delirious and not looking what he's doing. He buys more time by turning into the only open room: The shot up CHEMISTRY CLASS.

RICK (CON'T)
C'mon, Victor. You son of a bitch.

Rick follows him in, picking up a STUDENT DESK with his good arm.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM

Finally loading the shell but COUGHING from the chemical fumes, VICTOR whips around by the windows.

RICK
Victor!!

Victor snaps shut the Shotgun and points it at Rick.

RICK (CON'T)
Go to hell!

Rick hurls the STUDENT DESK directly at him. Victor FIRES -- but at the flying DESK that crashes into him in a CHEMICAL EXPLOSION.

Rick crawls out of the burning classroom, covering his mouth with his hand just as the room's SPRINKLER SYSTEM erupts, showering every square foot of its floor with gallons of water.

He looks back at the ball of fire that was once Victor Duncan, diminishing in glow as the sprinkler douses it with water.

The FIRE ALARM sounds the ugly victory. The fight to end all the fighting is finally over.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MAIN HALLWAY

RICK climbs to his feet and starts down the hallway as best as a man can with a bullets in one arm and buckshot throughout.

He puts his arm around Hilary who gets up from the stairs stained with his and Victor's blood. The morning sun shines through the shattered stairwell window that also lets in the sounds of early arriving cars.

Hilary helps him down the hallway toward the open main entrance.

RICK
Why are you here?

HILARY
I'd been calling all night to tell you. I'm not leaving.

Rick smiles through his pain.

RICK
It's not any less ugly here.

HILARY
It's worth it now.

He musters a smile through all his pain

HILARY (CON'T)
Rick. I'm going to take you to the hospital. I have my car outside.

Rick doesn't answer. Outside in the flood of sunlight, he notices two figures standing at the bottom of the steps.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAPARRAL HIGH SCHOOL

RICK stops with HILARY at the top of the steps.

Below, KEVIN and JOJO wait with guns in their hands. The few students arriving stop at a comfortable distance from the danger. Rick can barely stand looking at the two as he makes the announcement.

RICK
Victor is dead.

KEVIN
We know, motherfucker.

JOJO
You're gonna die for it.

They raise their guns at Rick. Rick realizes that after all this, Jojo may be right.

RICK
(to Hilary)
Stay here.

Confused, Hilary doesn't resist as Rick stands up as straight as he can and does his best walk forward between the two assailants.

KEVIN
What the fuck you doing?

JOJO
Take one more step I'll blow your brains out.

Rick continues walking as if he couldn't hear him. He continues walking in the direction of the STUDENTS keeping their distance from the danger. He sees TREENA in the crowd. She sees him and what is going on.

JOJO
Stop walking!!

Jojo runs around in front of Rick so that he can see the gun pointing to his forehead.

Hilary runs up from behind and links a tight arm with Rick.

RICK
(to Hilary)
I said stay back!!

HILARY
I don't give a shit what you said.

JOJO
I'll blow your brains out! Stop walking! Both of you.

Treena runs up to the scene. The students watching keep a smaller distance until they almost surround the event.

TREENA
Jojo!

JOJO
He killed him, Treena. Victor's dead!

TREENA
That's where he belongs! That's where he always belonged!

Some of the students close in around Kevin. They take his gun away without struggle.

But Jojo continues to walk backwards in front of Rick with the shaking gun pointed to his head.

JOJO
I'll kill you. I'll kill you. I swear I will.

TREENA
Put the gun down, Jojo. Put it down.

JOJO
I can't! Stay away!

TREENA
Yes you can. You're gonna put the gun down. Now.

Jojo finally realizes the futility. He lowers the gun and comes to a stop, bending over on his knees to hide his face.

JOJO
(to himself)
He's dead.

THREE POLICE CARS squeal in through the front gate. Rick and Hilary continue walking until they stop with the crowd of students at his MOTORCYCLE.

As he does his best to get his leg over the machine, he catches Treena's eyes among the faces.

RICK (CON'T)
(to Treena)
Monday morning.

She smiles slightly with a knowing nod then walks away. Rick sees several more cars in the nearby parking lot.

JACK HARTER puts a baseball bat away as he gets out. NOFSINGER stares at the wounded principal through his windshield.

A POLICE CAR pulls up next to Rick as some of the other teachers get out of their cars and start walking towards him. More STUDENTS pour in through the open gate.

The POLICE OFFICER steps out of his car with his PARTNER. He stops next to Rick, eyeing his bloodied shoulder and legs.

POLICE OFFICER
What the hell happened here?

By now, Jack Harter and most of the teachers are standing nearby. More students collect around the scene. Rick looks the officer straight in the eye, then points behind.

RICK
There are two students lying dead in that building.

The Officer shoots an astonished glance to his partner, then back to Rick.

POLICE OFFICER
And what the hell did you have to do with this?

Rick clears his throat to answer. Jack Harter interrupts.

MR. HARTER
He tried to stop it.

The Officer looks to Harter.

MR. HARTER (CON'T)
It was a gang fight. We all knew about it. But only Rick tried to stop it.

The officer looks back to Rick, starting up his motorcycle with his near crippling injuries.

POLICE OFFICER
Who are you?

Rick looks to Harter, then back to the Officer.

RICK
The principal.

And with that, Rick revs up and rides off through the parting students toward the open security gate and the bright morning sun.

FADE TO BLACK

END